LEAVES OF GRASS

WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHY

WHITMAN

Barbara Beaumont Cole
January 1949
Oberlin, Ohio

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1890.

David McKay

from his friend

Walt Whitman

LEAVES OF GRASS

By

WALT WHITMAN

Including a Fac-simile autobiography variorum readings of the poems and a department of *Gathered Leaves*

Philadelphia,-
DAVID McKAY,
Washington Square.

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PREFACE.

THIS edition of LEAVES OF GRASS, presenting, as it does, many new features, requires a word of explanation. The early editions are now almost entirely out of the market, a fact of no great importance to the reader, were it not that they are sought for more because of their contents than their imprint.

Perhaps no author was given more to change than Walt Whitman. Many poems or parts of poems have been either altered, or discarded for a time to appear in a new form in later editions, and not a few have disappeared entirely. His poems appeal to the student rather than to the casual reader, and this edition has been prepared with the clearest recognition of that fact. It aims to give the growing as well as the grown Whitman. The accepted readings are given in the text. Each poem has been carefully compared with that appearing in all previous editions, and the changes have been inserted in footnotes. The lines have been numbered, by which means the reader can readily compare the various readings and mark their transformations. Under the head of "Gathered Leaves" I have collected such poems as have been dropped by the way, some of which appeared in only one, and others in several editions.

As Walt Whitman's publisher, I was frequently called upon to give information concerning poems whose headings had been changed. These have been noted, and in the alphabetical list at the end of the volume all such titles appear, with reference to the present title.

This work is but a recognition of the necessities which were developed by years of association with LEAVES OF GRASS. That it will be appreciated by all lovers of Whitman I do not question. For any errors of commission I accept all responsibility; for those of omission (and there are a few), conditions which I could not control are alone responsible, a fact which time will yet correct. Walt Whitman was an unique character. As his most successful publisher I saw much of him, and learned to love his sweet and kindly nature. No one could enter the charmed circle of his friendship without feeling the mastery of his personality. This book, the work of my own hands, I give as a token of those never-to-be-forgotten days. To have met Whitman was a privilege, to have been his friend was an honor. The latter was mine; and among the many reminiscences of my life, none are to me more pleasing than those which gather about the name of "The Good Grey Poet."

DAVID MCKAY.

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Biographical Note of Walt Whitman

1819 - May 31

Born at West Hills, Long Island, State of New York — second child of Walter and Louisa (born Van Velsor) Whitman. 1820, '21, '22 and '23 continued at West Hills.

1824

Moved to Brooklyn. Went to Public School. 1831, tended in lawyer's office. Then a doctor's. In 1834 went into printing office to learn type-setting. ~~Etc.~~

1838

Teaching country schools in Suffolk county. Continued at it, partly in Queens county, for three years. Then starts a weekly paper "the Long Islander" at Huntington L. I.

1840

Back in New York City working at printing and journalistic writing. In 1846 and '7 edits the "Eagle" newspaper in Brooklyn.

1848

Goes to New Orleans as an editor on the staff of "the Crescent" newspaper. Afterward travels south and south west.

1850

Returns north. Publishes "the Freeman" newspaper in Brooklyn. Then works at building houses and selling them

Issues "Leaves of Grass." first edition, small quarto, 95 pages
In 1856, 2d edition, 16 mo. 384 pages. 1860. third edition
~~4~~ 456 pages, 12 mo. Boston.

1862

Goes down to the Secession War Fields.
Begins his ministrations to the wounded in the hospitals and after
battles, and continues at them steadily for three years.
In 1865- gets an appointment as Department
Clerk

1867

Publishes 4th edition "Leaves of Grass" including
"Drum Taps". In 1871 fifth edition

1873

Prostrated by paralysis at Washington.
Starts for Atlantic sea-shore by order of the
physician. Breaks down badly at Philadelphia,
and takes up quarters in Camden, New
Jersey; where he has remained up to date; for over fifteen years.

1876

Sixth issue or Centennial of L. of G. with another Volume,
"Two Rivulets" of prose and poems alternately. In 1881,
seventh issue of L. of G. publ by Osgood & Co. Boston.

1882

Eighth issue of "Leaves of Grass" by David McKay. Philadelphia. Also "Specimen Days" a prose and autobiographic Volume.

1888

Mr Whitman is now in his 70th year. He is almost entirely disabled physically through the paralysis from his persistent army hospital labors (in 1863 and '64). But is now just printing we hear a little volume of additional prose and verse called "November Boughs." He resides in Mickle street Camden, New Jersey.

INSCRIPTIONS.

ONE'S-SELF I SING.

First published in 1870.

One's-Self I sing—a simple, separate Person;
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-masse*.

Of Physiology from top to toe I sing;
Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the muse
—I say the Form complete is worthier far;
The Female equally with the male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE.

First published in 1870.

1.

As I ponder'd in silence,
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,
A Phantom arose before me, with distrustful aspect,
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,
The genius of poets of old lands,
As to me directing like flame its eyes,
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said;
Know'st thou not, there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers?

2

Be it so, then I answer'd,
I too, haughty Shade, also sing war—and a longer and greater one than any,

Waged in my book with varying fortune—with flight, advance, and retreat—Victory deferr'd and wavering,
(Yet, methinks, certain, or as good as certain, at the last,)—The field the world;
For life and death—for the Body, and for the eternal Soul,
Lo! I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I, above all, promote brave soldiers.

IN CABIN'D SHIPS AT SEA.

First published in 1870.

1

In cabin'd ships, at sea,
The boundless blue on every side expanding,
With whistling winds and music of the waves—the large imperious waves—In such,
Or some lone bark, buoy'd on the dense marine,
Where, joyous, full of faith, spreading white sails,
She cleaves the ether, mid the sparkle and the foam of day, or under many a star at night,
By sailors young and old, haply will I, a reminiscence of the land, be read,
In full rapport at last.

2

Here are our thoughts—voyagers' thoughts,
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by them be said;
The sky o'erarches here—we feel the undulating deck beneath our feet,
We feel the long pulsation—ebb and flow of endless motion;
The tones of unseen mystery—the vague and vast suggestions of the briny world—the liquid-flowing syllables,
The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melancholy rhythm,
The boundless vista, and the horizon far and dim, are all here,
And this is Ocean's poem.

3

Then falter not, O book! fulfil your destiny!
You, not a reminiscence of the land alone,
You too, as a lone bark, cleaving the ether—purpos'd I know not whither—yet ever full of faith,

Consort to every ship that sails—sail you!
Bear forth to them, folded, my love—(Dear mariners! for you
I fold it here, in every leaf;)
Speed on, my Book! spread your white sails, my little bark,
athwart the imperious waves!
Chant on—sail on—bear o'er the boundless blue, from me, to
every shore,
This song for mariners and all their ships.

TO FOREIGN LANDS.

First published in 1860. In that and 1867 under title of "To Other Lands."

I HEARD that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle, the
New World,[1]
And to define America, her athletic Democracy;[2]
Therefore I send you my poems, that you behold in them what
you wanted.

TO A HISTORIAN.[3]

First published in 1860 as No. 10—"Chants Democratic." See Note.

You who celebrate bygones!
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races—the
life that has exhibited itself;

[1] 1860 '67 read "I hear you have been asking for something to represent the new race, our self-poised Democracy."

[2] Line 2. Added in 1870.

[3] 1860 reads: "HISTORIAN! you who celebrate bygones!
You have explored the outward, the surface of the races—the life that has exhibited itself,
You have treated man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers, and priests;
But now I also, arriving, contribute something:
I, an habitué of the Alleghanies, treat man as he is in the influences of Nature, in himself, in his own inalienable rights,
Advancing, to give the spirit and the traits of new Democratic ages, myself, personally,
(Let the future behold them all in me—Me, so puzzling and contradictory—Me, a Manhattanese, the most loving and arrogant of men;)
I do not tell the usual facts, proved by records and documents,
What I tell, (talking to every born American,) requires no further proof than he or she who will hear me, will furnish, by silently meditating alone;
I press the pulse of the life that has hitherto seldom exhibited itself, but has generally sought concealment, (the great pride of man, in himself,)
I illuminate feelings, faults, yearnings, hopes—I have come at last, no more ashamed nor afraid;
Chanter of Personality, outlining a history yet to be,
I project the ideal man, the American of the future."

Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers and priests;
I, habitan[1] of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in himself, in his own rights,
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself, (the great pride of man in himself;)
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,
I project the history of the future.

FOR HIM I SING.

First published in 1870.

For him I sing,
I raise the Present on the Past,
(As some perennial tree, out of its roots, the present on the past:)
With time and space I him dilate—and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself, by them, the law unto himself.

WHEN I READ THE BOOK.

First published in 1867.

When I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this, then, (said I,) what the author calls a man's life?
And so will some one, when I am dead and gone, write my life?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life;[2]
Why, even I myself, I often think, know little or nothing of my real life;
Only a few hints—a few diffused, faint clues and indirections,
I seek, for my own use, to trace out here.)

BEGINNING MY STUDIES.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

Beginning my studies, the first step pleas'd me so much,
The mere fact, consciousness—these forms—the power of motion,
The least insect or animal—the senses—eyesight—love;[3]

[1] Songs Before Parting reads "habitué."
[2] 1867 reads "(As if any man really knew aught of my life;
As if you, O cunning Soul, did not keep your secret well!)"
[3] "love." Added in 1870.

The first step, I say, aw'd me and pleas'd me so much,
I have hardly gone, and hardly wish'd to go, any farther,[1]
But stop and loiter all the time, to sing it in extatic songs.

TO THEE, OLD CAUSE!

First published in 1870.

To thee, old Cause!
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause!
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet Idea!
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands!
After a strange, sad war—great war for thee,
(I think all war through time was really fought, and ever will be really fought, for thee;)
These chants for thee—the eternal march of thee.

Thou orb of many orbs!
Thou seething principle! Thou well-kept, latent germ! Thou centre!
Around the idea of thee the strange sad war revolving,
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,
(With yet unknown results to come, for thrice a thousand years,)
These recitatives for thee—my Book and the War are one,
Merged in its spirit I and mine—as the contest hinged on thee,
As a wheel on its axis turns, this Book, unwitting to itself,
Around the Idea of thee.

STARTING FROM PAUMANOK.[2]

First published in 1860 under title of "Proto-Leaf." See note.

I

STARTING from fish-shape Paumanok, where I was born,
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother;
After roaming many lands—lover of populous pavements;

[1] Drum Taps read:
"I have never gone, and never wish'd to go, any farther,
But stop and loiter all my life, to sing it in extatic songs."

[2] 1860. Proto-Leaf first stanza reads:
"FREE, fresh, savage,
Fluent, luxuriant, self-content, fond of persons and places,
Fond of fish-shape Paumanok, where I was born,
Fond of the sea—lusty-begotten and various,

Dweller in Mannahatta,[1] my city—or on southern savannas;
Or a soldier camp'd, or carrying my knapsack and gun—or a miner in California;
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my drink from the spring;
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,
Far from the clank of crowds, intervals passing, rapt and happy;
Aware of the fresh free giver, the flowing Missouri—aware of mighty Niagara;
Aware of the buffalo herds, grazing the plains—the hirsute and strong-breasted bull;
Of earth,[2] rocks, Fifth-month flowers, experienced—stars, rain, snow, my amaze;
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones, and the mountain-hawk's,
And heard at dusk the unrival'd one, the hermit thrush from the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,[3]
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This, then, is life;
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.

Boy of the Mannahatta, the city of ships, my city,
Or raised inland, or of the south savannas,
Or full-breath'd on Californian air, or Texan or Cuban air,
Tallying, vocalizing all—resounding Niagara—resounding Missouri,
Or rude in my home in Kanuck woods,
Or wandering and hunting, my drink water, my diet meat,
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,
Far from the clank of crowds, an interval passing, rapt and happy,
Stars, vapor, snow, the hills, rocks, the Fifth Month flowers, my amaze, my love,
Aware of the buffalo, the peace-herds, the bull, strong-breasted and hairy,
Aware of the mocking-bird of the wilds at daybreak,
Solitary, singing in the west, I strike up for a new world."

[1] 1867 reads "city of ships my city—"
[2] 1867. For "earth" reads "earths."
[3] 1860 adds "the Soul, your-self, the present and future lands." 1867 adds "Yourself, the present and future lands."

How curious! how real!
Underfoot the divine soil—overhead the sun.

See, revolving,[1] the globe;
The ancestor-continents, away, group'd together;
The present and future continents, north and south, with the isthmus between.

See, vast, trackless spaces;
As in a dream, they change, they swiftly fill;
Countless masses debouch upon them;
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institutions, known.

See, projected, through time,
For me, an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend—they never stop,
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions;
One generation playing its part, and passing on;
Another generation playing its part, and passing on in its turn,
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me, to listen,
With eyes retrospective towards me,

3

Americanos! conquerors![2] marches humanitarian;
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies;[3]

[1] 1860. "The globe" begins line 23.
[2] 1860. For "conquerors!" read "Masters!"
[3] 1860. For lines 40–44 reads:
"Chants of the prairies,
Chants of the long-running Mississippi,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota,
Inland chants—chants of Kanzas,
Chants away down to Mexico, and up north to Oregon—Kanadian chants,
Chants of teeming and turbulent cities—chants of mechanics,
Yankee chants—Pennsylvanian chants—chants of Kentucky and Tennessee,
Chants of dim-lit mines—chants of mountain-tops,
Chants of sailors—chants of the Eastern Sea and the Western Sea,
Chants of the Mannahatta, the place of my dearest love, the place surrounded by hurried and sparkling currents,
Health chants—joy chants—robust chants of young men,
Chants inclusive—wide reverberating chants,
Chants of the Many In One."

Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea;
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota;
Chants going forth from the centre, from Kansas, and thence, equi-distant,
Shooting in pulses of fire, ceaseless, to vivify all.

4.

In the Year 80 of The States,
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here,[1] from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-six years old, in perfect health, begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
(Retiring back a while, sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,)[2]
I harbor, for good or bad—I permit to speak, at every hazard,
Nature now without check, with original energy.

5

Take my leaves, America![3] take them, South, and take them, North!
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own offspring;
Surround them, East and West! for they would surround you;
And you precedents! connect lovingly with them, for they connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times;
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters:
Now, if eligible, O that the great masters might return and study me!

In the name of These States, shall I scorn the antique?
Why These are the children of the antique, to justify it.

[1] 1860. "From" begins new line.
[2] 1860. After line 51 reads "With accumulations, now coming forward in front, arrived again, I harbor, for good or bad—I permit to speak."
[3] "take them, South, and take them, North!" added in 1867.

6

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers, on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left, wafted hither:
I have perused it[1]—own it is admirable, (moving awhile among it;)
Think[2] nothing can ever be greater—nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves;
Regarding it all intently a long while[3]—then dismissing it,
I stand in my place, with my own day, here.

Here lands female and male;
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world—here the flame of materials;
Here Spirituality, the translatress, the openly-avow'd,
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms;
The satisfier, after due long-waiting, now advancing,
Yes, here comes my mistress, the Soul.

7

The Soul:
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual poems;
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my Soul, and of immortality.

I will make a song for These States, that no one State may under any circumstances be subjected to another State;
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night between all The States, and between any two of them:[4]

[1] 1860 reads "I own," etc. (moving awhile among it;) added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "I think," etc.
[3] 1860 reads "I regard it all intently a long while, Then take my place for good with my own day and race here."
[4] 1860. After line 85 reads "And I will make a song of the organic bargains of These States—And a shrill song of curses on him who would dissever the Union."

And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of weapons with menacing points,
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces:
—And a song make I, of the One form'd out of all;
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all;[1]
Resolute, warlike One, including and over all;
(However high the head of any else, that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands;
I will trail the whole geography of the globe, and salute courteously every city large and small;
And employments! I will put in my poems, that with you is heroism, upon land and sea;
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.[2]

I will sing the song of companionship;
I will show what alone must finally compact These;
I believe These are to found their own ideal of manly love, indicating it in me;
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were threatening to consume me;
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires;
I will give them complete abandonment;
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades, and of love;
(For who but I should understand love, with all its sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)

8

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races;
I advance from the people[3] in their own spirit;
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! Omnes! let others ignore what they may;
I make the poem of evil also—I commemorate that part also;
I am myself just as much evil as good,[4] and my nation is—And I say there is in fact no evil;
(Or if there is, I say it is just as important to you, to the land,[5] or to me, as anything else.)

[1] Lines 88–90 added in 1867.
[2] 1860 '67. After line 94 read line 179 this edition.
[3] 1860 '67. After "people" read "en-masse."
[4] "and my nation is" added in 1867.
[5] 1860. For "land" reads "earth."

I too, following many, and follow'd by many, inaugurate a Religion—I descend into the arena ;[1]
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there,[2] the winner's pealing shouts ;[3]
Who knows ?[4] they may rise from me yet, and soar above every thing.)

Each is not for its own sake ;
I say the whole earth, and all the stars in the sky, are for Religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough ;
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough ;
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain the future is.

I say[5] that the real and permanent grandeur of These States must be their Religion ;
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur :
(Nor character, nor life worthy the name, without Religion ;[6]
Nor land, nor man or woman, without Religion.)

9

What are you doing, young man ?
Are you so earnest—so given up to literature, science, art, amours ?
These ostensible realities, politics,[7] points ?
Your ambition or business, whatever it may be ?

It is well—Against such I say not a word—I am their poet also ;
But behold ! such swiftly subside—burnt up for Religion's sake ;
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential life of the earth,
Any more than such are to Religion.

[1] 1860 '67. For "I descend into the arena" read "I too go to the wars."
[2] 1860 '67. For "there" read "thereof."
[3] 1860 reads "the conqueror's shouts."
[4] "Who knows?" added in 1867.
[5] 1860. For "I say" reads "I specifically announce."
[6] Lines 121–2 added in 1867.
[7] 1860. For "politics" reads "materials."

10

What do you seek, so pensive and silent?
What do you need, Camerado?
Dear son![1] do you think it is love?

Listen, dear son—listen, America, daughter or son![2]
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess—and yet it satisfies—it is great;
But there is something else very great—it makes the whole coincide;
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands, sweeps and provides for all.

11

Know you! solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater Religion,
The following chants, each for its kind, I sing.[3]

My comrade!
For you, to share with me, two greatnesses—and a third one, rising inclusive and more resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy—and the greatness of Religion.

Melange mine own! the unseen and the seen;[4]
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty;
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me;[5]
Living beings, identities, now doubtless near us, in the air, that we know not of;[6]
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me;
These selecting—these, in hints, demanded of me.

Not he, with a daily kiss, onward from childhood kissing me,[6]

[1] 1860 reads "Mon cher!"
[2] 1860. For line 134 reads "Proceed, comrade."
[3] 1860. Lines 138–139 read "O I see the following poems are indeed to drop in the earth the germ of a great religion."
[4] 1860. Line 143 reads "Melange mine!" "Own," etc., added in 1867.
[5] 1860. After line 145 reads "Wondrous interplay between the seen and unseen."
[6] 1860. After line 146 reads "Extasy everywhere touching and thrilling me."
[6] 1860 reads "Not he, adhesive, kissing me so long with his daily kiss."

Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to him,
Any more than I am held to the heavens, to the spiritual world,
And to the identities of the Gods, my lovers,[1] faithful and true,
After what they have done to me, suggesting[2] themes.

O such themes! Equalities!
O amazement of things! O divine average!
O warblings under the sun—usher'd, as now, or at noon, or setting!
O strain, musical, flowing through ages—now reaching hither!
I take to your reckless and composite chords—I add to them, and cheerfully pass them forward.

12

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,
I have seen where the she-bird, the mocking-bird, sat on her nest in the briers, hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also;
I have paused to hear him, near at hand, inflating his throat, and joyfully singing.

And while I paused, it came to me that what he really sang for was not there only,
Nor for his mate, nor himself only, nor all sent back by the echoes;
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,
A charge transmitted, and gift occult, for those being born.

13

Democracy!
Near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme!
For the brood beyond us and of us,
For those who belong here, and those to come,
I, exultant, to be ready for them, will now shake out carols stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth.

[1] 1860 reads "my unknown lovers," "faithful and true," added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "such themes."

I will make the songs of passion, to give them their way,
And your songs, outlaw'd[1] offenders—for I scan you with kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,
To earn[2] for the body and the mind whatever adheres, and goes forward, and is not dropt by death.

I will effuse egotism, and show it underlying all—and I will be the bard of personality;
And I will show of male and female that either is but the equal of the other;
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me—for I am determin'd to tell you with courageous clear voice, to prove you illustrious;
And I will show that there is no imperfection[3] in the present—and can be none in the future;
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody, it may be turn'd to beautiful results—and I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death;
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time[4] and events are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts;
But I will make leaves, poems, poemets, songs, says, thoughts, with reference to ensemble:
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days;
And I will not make a poem, nor the least part of a poem, but has reference to the Soul;
(Because, having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there is no one, nor any particle of one, but has reference to the Soul.)

[1] "Outlaw'd" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "Namely to earn," etc.
[3] 1860 reads "no imperfection in male or female, or in the earth, or in the present," etc.
[4] 1860. For "that time," etc., reads "that no one thing in the universe is inferior to another thing."

14

Was somebody asking to see the Soul?
See! your own shape and countenance—persons, substances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys, and afterwards[1] loosen them:
How can the real body ever die, and be buried?

Of your real body, and any man's or woman's real body,
Item for item, it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners, and pass to fitting spheres,
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the meaning, the main concern,
Any more than a man's substance and life, or a woman's substance and life, return in the body and the Soul,
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold! the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern—and includes and is the Soul;
Whoever you are! how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it.

15

Whoever you are! to you endless announcements.

Daughter of the lands, did you wait for your poet?
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative hand?

Toward the male of The States, and toward the female of The States,[2]
Live words—words to the lands.

O the lands![3] interlink'd, food-yielding lands!

[1] 1860. "afterward."
[2] 1860. After line 205 reads "Toward the President, the Congress, the diverse Governors, the new Judiciary."
[3] 1860 reads "O the lands!" next line, "Lands scorning invaders! Interlinked," etc.

Land of coal and iron! Land of gold! Lands of cotton, sugar, rice![1]
Land of wheat, beef, pork! Land of wool and hemp! Land of the apple and grape![2]
Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! Land of those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!
Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie![3]
Lands where the northwest Columbia winds, and where the southwest Colorado winds!
Land of the eastern Chesapeake! Land of the Delaware!
Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!
Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! Land of Vermont and Connecticut!
Land[4] of the ocean shores! Land of sierras and peaks!
Land of boatmen and sailors! Fishermen's land!
Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate ones![5]
The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-limb'd!
The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced sisters and the inexperienced sisters!
Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the diverse! the compact!
The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!
[6]O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at any rate include you all with perfect love!
I cannot be discharged from you! not from one, any sooner than another!
O Death! O for all that, I am yet of you, unseen, this hour, with irrepressible love,
Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,
Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples, on Paumanok's sands,

[1] 1860. After line 208, reads "Odorous and sunny land! Floridian land! Land of the spinal river, the Mississippi! Land of the Alleghanies! Ohio's land!"

[2] 1860 reads "Land of the potato, the apple, and the grape!"

[3] 1860. After line 211 reads "Land there of rapt thought, and of the realization of the stars! Land of simple, holy, untamed lives!"

[4] 1860 reads "Land of many oceans."

[5] 1860. For "ones" reads "lovers."

[6] 1860. For lines 223–4 reads "O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations!
O I cannot be discharged from you!"

Crossing the prairies—dwelling again in Chicago—dwelling in every town,[1]
Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,
Listening to the orators and the oratresses in public halls,
Of and through The States, as during life—each man and woman my neighbor,
The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to him and her,
The Mississippian and Arkansian[2] yet with me—and I yet with any of them;
Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river—yet in my house of adobie,
Yet returning eastward—yet in the Sea-Side State, or in Maryland,
Yet Kanadian,[3] cheerily braving the winter—the snow and ice welcome to me,
Yet a true son either of Maine, or of the Granite State, or of the Narragansett Bay State, or of the Empire State;
Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same—yet welcoming every new brother;
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones, from the hour they unite with the old ones;
Coming among the new ones myself, to be their companion and equal—coming personally to you now;
Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

16

With me, with firm holding—yet haste, haste on.

For your life, adhere to me!
Of all the men of the earth, I only can unloose you and toughen you;
I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to give myself really to you—but what of that?
Must not Nature be persuaded many times?

No dainty dolce affettuoso I;
Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,

[1] 1860. For "in every town" reads "in many towns."
[2] 1860. After "Arkansian" reads "the woman and the man of Utah, Dakotah, Nebraska, yet with me," etc.
[3] 1860 reads "Yet a child of the North—yet Kanadian," etc.

To be wrestled with as I pass, for the solid prizes of the universe;
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

17

On my way a moment I pause;
Here for you! and here for America!
Still the Present I raise aloft—Still the Future of The States I harbinge, glad and sublime;
And for the Past, I pronounce what the air holds of the red aborigines.

The red aborigines!
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names;
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla;
Leaving such to The States, they melt, they depart, charging the water and the land with names.

18

O expanding and swift! O henceforth,
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick, and audacious;
A world primal again—Vistas of glory, incessant and branching;
A new race, dominating previous ones, and grander far—with new contests,
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and arts.

These! my voice announcing—I will sleep no more, but arise;
You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you, fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and storms.

19

See! steamers steaming through my poems!
See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and landing;
See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the bark-boat, the maize-leaf, the clearing, the rude fence, and the backwoods village;

See, on the one side the Western Sea, and on the other the Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my poems, as upon their own shores.

See, pastures and forests in my poems—See, animals, wild and tame—See, beyond the Kanzas, countless herds of buffalo, feeding on short curly grass;
See, in my poems, cities,[1] solid, vast, inland, with paved streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and commerce;[2]
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—See, the electric telegraph,[3] stretching across the Continent, from the Western Sea to Manhattan;
See, through Atlantica's depths, pulses American, Europe reaching—pulses of Europe, duly return'd;
See, the strong and quick locomotive, as it departs, panting, blowing the steam-whistle;
See, ploughmen, ploughing farms—See, miners, digging mines—See, the numberless factories;
See, mechanics, busy at their benches, with tools—See from among them, superior judges, philosophs, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses;
See, lounging through the shops and fields of The States, me, well-belov'd, close-held by day and night;
Hear the loud echoes of my songs there! Read the hints come at last.

20

O Camerado close!
O you and me at last—and us two only.[4]

O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!
O something extatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!

[1] 1860 reads "Old and new cities."
[2] 1860. After line 272 reads "See the populace, millions upon millions, handsome, tall, muscular, both sexes, clothed in easy and dignified clothes—teaching, commanding, marrying, generating, equally electing and elective."
[3] "stretching across," etc., and line 274, added in 1867.
[4] 1860. After line 281 reads "O power, liberty, eternity at last!
O to be relieved of distinctions! to make as much of vices as virtues!
O to level occupations and the sexes! O to bring all to common ground! O adhesiveness!
O the pensive aching to be together—you know not why, and I know not why."

O now I triumph—and you shall also ;
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer and lover !
O to haste, firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

THE SHIP STARTING.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

LO ! THE unbounded sea !
On its breast a Ship starting,[1] spreading all her sails—an ample Ship, carrying even her moonsails ;
The pennant is flying aloft, as she speeds, she speeds so stately —below, emulous waves press forward,
They surround the Ship, with shining curving motions, and foam.

UNFOLDED OUT OF THE FOLDS.

First published in 1856, under title of "Poem of Women." In 1860 as No. 14, "Leaves of Grass."

UNFOLDED out of the folds of the woman, man comes unfolded, and is always to come unfolded ;
Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth, is to come the superbest man of the earth ;
Unfolded out of the friendliest woman, is to come the friendliest man ;
Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman, can a man be form'd of perfect body ;
Unfolded only out of the inimitable poem of the woman, can come the poems of man—(only thence have my poems come ;)
Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only thence can appear the strong and arrogant man I love ;
Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled woman I love, only thence come the brawny embraces of the man ;
Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain, come all the folds of the man's brain, duly obedient ;
Unfolded out of the justice of the woman, all justice is unfolded ;

[1] "starting" added in 1870.

Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy :
A man is a great thing upon the earth, and through eternity—
but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman,
First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped in himself.

TO YOU.

First published in 1860.

STRANGER ! if you, passing, meet me, and desire to speak to me,
why should you not speak to me?
And why should I not speak to you?

WALT WHITMAN.

First published in 1855.

I

I CELEBRATE myself;
And what I assume you shall assume;
For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my Soul;
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of summer grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes—the shelves are crowded with perfumes;
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it;
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume—it has no taste of the distillation—it is odorless;
It is for my mouth forever—I am in love with it;
I will go to the bank by the wood, and become undisguised and naked;
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

2

The smoke of my own breath ;
Echoes, ripples,[1] buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine ;
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs ;
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore, and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn ;
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice, words loos'd to the eddies of the wind ;
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms ;
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag ;
The delight alone, or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides ;
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth much?
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me, and you shall possess the origin of all poems ;
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun—(there are millions of suns left ;)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books ;
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me :
You shall listen to all sides, and filter them from yourself.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end ;
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now ;
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

[1] 1855, "ripples and buzzed."

Urge, and urge, and urge;
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance—always substance and increase, always sex;[1]
Always a knit of identity—always distinction—always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail—learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery, here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my Soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my Soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen, and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best, and dividing it from the worst, age vexes age;
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean;
Not an inch, nor a particle of an inch, is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing:
As the hugging and loving Bed-fellow[2] sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day,[3] with stealthy tread,
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels, swelling the house with their plenty,

[1] "always sex" added in 1856.
[2] 1855 reads "As God comes a loving bed-fellow and sleeps at my side all night and close on the peep of the day,
And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the house with their plenty.
[3] "with stealthy tread" added in 1867.

Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization, and scream at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show[1] me a cent,
Exactly the contents of one, and exactly the contents of two, and which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me;
People I meet—the effect upon me of my early life, or[2] the ward and city I live in, or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks,[3] compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
The sickness of one of my folks, or of myself, or ill-doing, or loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations;
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;[4]
These come to me days and nights, and go from me again,[5]
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am;
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary;
Looks down, is erect, or[6] bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
Looking with side-curved head, curious what will come next;[7]
Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and contenders;
I have no mockings or arguments—I witness and wait.

5

I believe in you, my Soul—the other I am must not abase itself to you;
And you must not be abased to the other.

[1] 1855 '56 read "to a cent."
[2] 1855 '56 read "of the ward" and "of the nation."
[3] 1855, "looks, business," etc. 1856, "looks, work," etc.
[4] Line 64 added in 1867.
[5] 1855 '56. "They come," etc.
[6] "or" added in 1860.
[7] 1855 '56 read "Looks with its side-curved head," etc.

Loafe with me on the grass—loose the stop from your throat;
Not words, not music or rhyme I want—not custom or lecture, not even the best;
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how once[1] we lay, such a transparent summer morning;
How[2] you settled your head athwart my hips, and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth;
And I know that the hand of God is the promise[3] of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the[4] brother of my own;
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers;
And that a kelson of the creation is love;
And limitless are leaves, stiff or drooping in the fields;
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them;
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, and heap'd stones, elder, mullen and poke-weed.

6

A child said, *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is, any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer, designedly dropt,[5]
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say, *Whose?*

[1] "once" added in 1860.
[2] "How" added in 1860.
[3] 1855 reads "elderhand of my own."
[4] 1855 reads "eldest brother."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "dropped."

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic;
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white;
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you, curling grass;
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men;
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them;
It may be you are from old people, and from women, and from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps;
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers;
Darker than the colorless beards of old men;
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues!
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere;
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death;
And if ever there was, it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward—nothing collapses;
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her, it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.

I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-wash'd babe, and am not contain'd between my hat and boots;
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike, and every one good;
The earth good, and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth, nor an adjunct of an earth;
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself;
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own—for me mine, male and female;
For me those[1] that have been boys, and that love women;
For me the man that is proud, and feels how it stings to be slighted;
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid—for me mothers, and the mothers of mothers;
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears;
For me children, and the begetters of children.

[2]Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale, nor discarded;
I see through the broadcloth and gingham, whether or no;
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be shaken away.

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle;
I lift the gauze, and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill;
I peeringly view them from the top.

[1] 1855. For "those" reads "all."
[2] 1855 '56 and '60, before line 137, read "Who need be afraid of the merge?"

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bed-room;
[1]I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair—I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, the tires of carts,[2] sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders;
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor;
The snow-sleighs,[3] the clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls;
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs;
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside, borne to the hospital;
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall;
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star, quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd;
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes;[4]
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall[5] sun-struck, or in fits;
What exclamations of women taken suddenly, who hurry home and give birth to babes;
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here—what howls restrain'd by decorum;
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips;
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come, and I depart.[6]

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready;
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon;
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged;
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

[1] Line 145 in 1855 '56 '60 reads "It is so—I witnessed the corpse—there the pistol had fallen."

[2] 1855 reads "and sluff."

[3] 1855. "The carnival of sleighs, the clinking and shouted jokes and pelts of snow-balls."

[4] 1855. After line 153 reads "The souls moving along, are they invisible while the least atom of the stones is visible?" 1856 and 1860, "while the least of the stones is visible."

[5] 1855 reads "who fall on the flags," etc.

[6] 1855 reads "I mind them or the resonance of them—I come again and again." 1856 reads "I mind them or the resonance of them—I come and I depart."

I am there—I help—I came stretch'd atop of the load;
I felt its soft jolts—one leg reclined on the other;
I jump from the cross-beams, and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels, and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone, far in the wilds and mountains, I hunt,
Wandering, amazed at my own lightness and glee;
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game;
Falling asleep[1] on the gather'd leaves, with my dog and gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her[2] sky-sails—she cuts the sparkle and scud;
My eyes settle the land—I bend at her prow, or shout joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt[3] for me;
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots, and went and had a good time:
(You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle.)

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west—the bride was a red girl;
Her father and his friends sat near,[4] cross-legged and dumbly smoking—they had moccasins to their feet, and large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders;
On a bank lounged the trapper—he was drest mostly in skins—his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck[5]—he held his bride by the hand;
She had long eyelashes—her head was bare—her coarse straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "Soundly falling asleep," etc.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "her three sky-sails."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "stopped."
[4] 1855 reads "near by."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 after "neck" begins new line: "One hand rested on his rifle—the other hand held firmly the wrist of the red girl."

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt[1] outside;
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile;
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log, and led him in and assured him,
And brought water, and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north;
(I had him sit next me at table—my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.)

II

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore;
Twenty-eight young men, and all so friendly:
Twenty-eight years of womanly life, and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank;
She hides, handsome and richly drest, aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?
Ah, the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you;
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather;
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair:
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "stopped."

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies ;
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs—their white bellies bulge to the sun—they do not ask who seizes fast to them ;
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch ;
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing clothes, or sharpens his knife at the stall in the market ;
I loiter, enjoying his repartee, and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil ;
Each has his main-sledge—they are all out—(there is a great heat in the fire.)

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements ;
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms ;
Over-hand the hammers swing[1]—over-hand so slow—over-hand so sure :
They do not hasten—each man hits in his place.

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses—the block swags underneath on its tied-over chain ;
The negro that drives the dray of the stone-yard—steady and tall he stands, pois'd on one leg on the string-piece ;
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast, and loosens over his hip-band ;
His glance is calm and commanding—he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his forehead ;
The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache—falls on the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant, and love him—and I do not stop there ;
I go with the team also.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "hammers roll."

In me the caresser of life wherever moving—backward as well as forward slueing;
To niches aside and junior bending.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain,[1] or halt in the leafy shade! what is that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck, on my distant and day-long ramble;
They rise together—they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,
And acknowledge[2] red, yellow, white, playing within me,
And consider[3] green and violet, and the tufted crown, intentional;
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else;
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to me;[4]
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night;
Ya-honk! he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation;
(The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listen close;[5]
I find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry[6] sky.)

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,
The brood of the turkey-hen, and she with her half-spread wings;
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections;
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

[1] "and chain" added in 1867.
[2] 1855 reads "the red, yellow and white," etc.
[3] 1855 reads "the green," etc.
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read, "and the mocking-bird in the swamp never studied," etc.
[5] 1855 reads "closer."
[6] 1855 '56 reads "November sky."

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,
Of men that live among cattle, or taste of the ocean or woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships, and[1] the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses;
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest,[2] cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me;
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns;
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me;
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will;
Scattering it freely forever.

15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft;
The carpenter dresses his plank—the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp;
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner;
The pilot seizes the king-pin—he heaves down with a strong arm;
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat—lance and harpoon are ready;
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches;
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar;
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel;
The farmer stops by the bars,[3] as he walks on a First-day loafe, and looks at the oats and rye;
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum, a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-room;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco, while his eyes blurr[4] with the manuscript;
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's[5] table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand—the drunkard nods by the bar-room stove;

[1] 1855 '56 read "of the wielders," etc., "of the drivers," etc.
[2] 1855 reads "and cheapest and nearest and easiest."
[3] 1855 '56 read "The farmer stops by the bars of a Sunday, and looks," etc.
[4] 1855 '56 read "his eyes get blurred."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "anatomist's table."

The machinist rolls up his sleeves—the policeman travels his beat—the gate-keeper marks who pass;
The young fellow drives the express-wagon—(I love him, though I do not know him;)
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race;
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young—some lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee;
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his saddle;
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the dancers bow to each other;
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret, and harks to the musical rain;
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron;[1]
The squaw, wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth, is offering moccasins and bead-bags for sale;
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent sideways;
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat, the plank is thrown for the shore-going passengers;
The young sister holds out the skein, while[2] the elder sister winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots;
The one-year wife is recovering and happy, having a week ago borne her first child;[3]
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine, or in the factory or mill;
The nine months' gone is in the parturition chamber, her faintness and pains are advancing;
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer—the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book—the sign-painter is lettering with red and gold;
The canal boy trots on the tow-path—the book-keeper counts at his desk—the shoemaker waxes his thread;

[1] 1855'56 '60. After line 280 reads "The reformer ascends the platform,
he spouts with his mouth and nose,
The company returns from its excursion, the darkey brings up the rear and
bears the well-riddled target."
[2] "while" added in 1860.
[3] 1855'56 "A week ago she bore," etc.

The conductor beats time for the band, and all the performers follow him;
The child is baptized—the convert is making his first professions;
The regatta is spread on the bay—the race is begun[1]—how the white sails sparkle!
The drover, watching his drove, sings out to them that would stray;
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent;)
The camera and plate are prepared, the lady must sit for her daguerreotype;
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly;
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips;
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck;
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other;
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths, nor jeer you;)
The President, holding[2] a cabinet council, is surrounded by the Great Secretaries;
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms;[3]
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold;
The Missourian crosses the plains, toting his wares and his cattle;
As the fare-collector goes through the train, he gives notice by the jingling of loose change;
The floor-men are laying the floor—the tinners are tinning the roof—the masons are calling for mortar;
In single file, each shouldering his hod, pass onward the laborers;
Seasons pursuing each other, the indescribable crowd is gather'd —it is the Fourth of Seventh-month[4]—(What salutes of cannon and small arms!)
Seasons pursuing each other, the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;

[1] "the race is begun" added in 1867.
[2] 1855 '56 read "holds," "he is surrounded," etc.
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "On the piazza walk five friendly matrons with twined arms."
[4] 1855 '56 read "July."

Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen surface;
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep with his axe;
Flatboatmen make fast, towards dusk, near the cottonwood or pekan-trees;
Coon-seekers go[1] through the regions of the Red river, or through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansaw;
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahoochee or Altamahaw;
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons around them;
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's sport;
The city sleeps, and the country sleeps;
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time;
The old husband sleeps by his wife, and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
And these one and all tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them;
And such as it is to be of these, more or less, I am.

16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise;
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse, and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine;
One of the Great Nation, the nation of many nations, the smallest the same, and the largest the same;
A southerner soon as a northerner—a planter nonchalant and hospitable, down by the Oconee I live;[2]
A Yankee, bound by my own way, ready for trade, my joints the limberest joints on earth, and the sternest joints on earth;
A Kentuckian, walking the vale of the Elkhorn, in my deer-skin leggings—a Louisianian or Georgian;[3]

[1] 1855 reads "go now through."
[2] "down by the Oconee I live" added in 1867.
[3] "Louisianian or Georgian" added in 1867.

A boatman over lakes or bays, or along coasts—a Hoosier, Badger, Buckeye ;[1]
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes, or up in the bush, or with fishermen off Newfoundland ;
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and tacking ;
At home on the hills of Vermont, or in the woods of Maine, or the Texan ranch ;
Comrade of Californians—comrade of free north-westerners, (loving their big proportions ;)
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen—comrade of all who shake hands and welcome to drink and meat ;
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfullest ;
A novice beginning, yet[2] experient of myriads of seasons ;
Of every hue[3] and caste am I, of every rank and religion ;[4]
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker ;[5]
A prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician,[6] priest.

I resist anything better than my own diversity ;
I breathe[7] the air, but leave plenty after me,
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place ;
The suns I see, and the suns I cannot see, are in their place ;
The palpable is in its place, and the impalpable is in its place.)

17

These are the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands—they are not original with me ;
If they are not yours as much as mine, they are nothing, or next to nothing ;[8]

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After line 330 read "A Louisianian or Georgian, a Pokeeasy from sand-hills and pines." See line 229.
[2] "yet" added in 1860.
[3] 1855 reads "Of every hue and trade and rank, of every caste and religion." 1856 reads "Of every hue, trade, rank, of every caste and religion." 1860 reads "Of every hue, trade, rank, caste and religion."
[4] 1855 '56 '60. After line 338 read "Not merely of the New World, but of Africa, Europe, Asia—a wandering savage."
[5] 1855 reads "A farmer, mechanic, or artist—a gentleman, sailor, lover or quaker." 1856 '60 read "A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, lover, quaker."
[6] 1855 reads "or priest."
[7] 1855 '56 '60 read "And breathe."
[8] 1855 '56 '60. After line 348 read "If they do not enclose everything, they are next to nothing."

If they are not the riddle, and the untying of the riddle, they are nothing;
If they are not just as close as they are distant, they are nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is, and the water is;
This is the common air that bathes the globe.[1]

18

With music strong I come—with my cornets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only—I play great marches for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall—battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead;[2]
I blow[3] through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
And to all generals that lost engagements! and all overcome heroes!
And the numberless unknown heroes, equal to the greatest heroes known.

[1] After line 352, 1855 '56 '60 read "This is the breath of laws and songs and behaviour,
This is the tasteless water of souls, this is the true sustenance,
It is for the illiterate, it is for the judges of the supreme court, it is for the federal capitol and the state capitols,
It is for the admirable communes of literary men* and composers and singers and lecturers and engineers and savans,
It is for the endless races of working people† and farmers and seamen.
This is the trill of a thousand clear cornets and scream of the octave flute and strike of triangles.
I play not a march‡ for victors only, I play great marches for conquered and slain persons."
1860 reads "This is the breath for America, because it is my breath.
This is for laws, songs, behavior."

[2] 1855 reads "I sound triumphal drums for the dead." 1856 '60 read "I beat," etc.

[3] 1855 reads "I fling," etc.

* 1856 '60 read "literats."
† 1856 '60 read "work-people."
‡ 1860 reads "not here marches."

19

This is the meal equally[1] set—this is the meat[2] for natural hunger;
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous—I make appointments with all;
I will not have a single person slighted or left away;
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited;
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited—the venerealee is invited:
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand—this is the float and odor of hair;
This is the touch of my lips to yours—this is the murmur of yearning;
This is the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face;
This is the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well, I have—for the Fourth-month showers have,[3] and the mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? Does[4] the early redstart, twittering through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence;
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20.

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man, anyhow? What am I? What are you?

All I mark as my own, you shall offset it with your own;
Else it were time lost listening to me.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "pleasantly set."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "meat and drink."
[3] 1855 '56 read "for the April rain has."
[4] 1855 reads "Or the early," etc.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums, and the ground but wallow and filth;
That life is a suck and a sell, and nothing remains at the end but threadbare crape, and tears.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids—conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd;
I wear[1] my hat as I please, indoors or out.

Why should I pray? Why should I venerate and be ceremonious?[2]

Having[3] pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsell'd with doctors, and calculated close,
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself—none more, and not one a barley-corn less;
And the good or bad I say of myself, I say of them.

And I know I am solid and sound;
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow;
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know[4] I am deathless;
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by the carpenter's compass;
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt stick at night.

I know I am august;
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood;
I see that the elementary laws never apologize;
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by, after all.)

I exist as I am—that is enough;
If no other in the world be aware, I sit content;
And if each and all be aware, I sit content.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "I cock my hat," etc.
[2] 1855 '56 read "Shall I pray? Shall I venerate and be ceremonious?"
[3] 1855 reads "I have pried through the strata and* analyzed to a hair, And* counselled with doctors and* calculated close and* found no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones."
[4] 1855 reads "And I know," etc.
* "and" omitted in 1856.

One world is aware, and by far the largest to me, and that is myself;
And whether I come to my own to-day, or in ten thousand or ten million years,
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite;
I laugh at what you call dissolution;
And I know the amplitude of time.

21

I am the poet of the Body;
And I am the poet of the Soul.

The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me;
The first I graft and increase upon myself—the latter I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man;
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man;
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the[1] chant of dilation or pride;
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough;
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? Are you the President?
It is a trifle—they will more than arrive there, every one, and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night;
I call to the earth and sea, half-held by the night.

Press close, bare-bosom'd night! Press close, magnetic, nourishing night!
Night of south winds! night of the large few stars!
Still, nodding night! mad, naked, summer night.

Smile, O voluptuous, cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees;
Earth of departed sunset! earth of the mountains, misty-topt!

[1] 1855 reads "I chant a new chant," etc.

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon, just tinged with blue !
Earth of shine and dark, mottling the tide of the river !
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds, brighter and clearer for my sake !
Far-swooping elbow'd earth ! rich, apple-blossom'd earth !
Smile, for your lover comes !

Prodigal, you have given me love ! Therefore I to you give love !
O unspeakable, passionate love ![1]

22

You sea ! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean ;
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers ;
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me ;
We must have a turn together—I undress—hurry me out of sight of the land ;
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse ;
Dash me with amorous wet—I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells !
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths !
Sea of the brine of life ! sea of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves !
Howler and scooper of storms ! capricious and dainty sea !
I am integral with you—I too am of one phase, and of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I—extoller of hate and conciliation ;
Extoller of amies, and those that sleep in each others' arms.

I am he attesting sympathy ;
(Shall I make my list of things in the house, and skip the house that supports them ?)[2]

I am not the poet of goodness only—I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

Washes and razors for foofoos—for me freckles and a bristling beard.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read, after line 441, "Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight !
We hurt each other as the bridegroom and the bride hurt each other."

[2] 1855 '56 '60 read, after line 456, "I am the poet of common sense and of the demonstrable and of immortality."

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me, and reform of evil propels me—I stand indifferent;
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait;
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?

I find one side a balance,[1] and the antipodal side a balance;
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine;
Thoughts and deeds of the present, our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past, or behaves well to-day, is not such a wonder;
The wonder is, always and always, how there can be a mean man or an infidel.

23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
And mine a word of the modern—the[2] word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks;
Here or henceforward, it is all the same to me—I accept Time, absolutely.[3]

It alone is without flaw—it rounds and completes all;[4]
That mystic, baffling wonder I love, alone completes all.

I accept reality,[5] and dare not question it;
Materialism first and last imbuing.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "I step up to say that what we do is right and what we affirm is right—and some is only the ore of right. Witness of us, one side a balance," etc.

[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "a word."

[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "One time as good as another, here or henceforward it is all the same to me."

[4] Lines 476–7 added in 1867.

[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "a word for reality, materialism first and last imbuing."

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop, mixt with cedar and branches of lilac;
This is the lexicographer—this the[1] chemist—this made a grammar of the old cartouches;
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas;
This is the geologist—this works with the scalpel—and this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen![2] to you the first honors always:
Your facts are useful and real—and yet they are not my dwelling;
(I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.)

Less the reminders of properties[3] told, my words;
And more the reminders, they, of life untold, and of freedom and extrication,
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor men and women fully equipt,
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives, and them that plot and conspire.

24

Walt Whitman am I, a Kosmos, of mighty Manhattan the son,[4]
Turbulent,[5] fleshy and sensual, eating, drinking and breeding;
No sentimentalist—no stander above men and women, or apart from them;
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me;
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.[6]

[1] 1855 reads "lexicographer or chemist."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "Gentlemen! I receive you and attach and clasp hands with you,
The facts are useful and real—they are not my dwelling—I enter by them to an area of the dwelling."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "I am less the reminder of property or qualities, and more the reminder of life,
And go on the square for my own sake and for others' sakes."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a Kosmos." 1867 reads "Walt Whitman am I, of mighty Manhattan the son."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "Disorderly."
[6] 1855 '56 '60. After line 499 read "And whatever I do or say I also return."

Through me the afflatus surging and surging—through me the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval—I give the sign of democracy;
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices;
Voices of the interminable generations of slaves;
Voices of prostitutes, and of deform'd persons;
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing, and of thieves and dwarfs;
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars—and of wombs, and of the father-stuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon;
Of the trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices;
Voice of sexes and lusts—voices veil'd, and I remove the veil;
Voices indecent, by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth;
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart;
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites;
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from;
The scent of these arm-pits, aroma finer than prayer;
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.[1]

If I worship one thing more than another, it shall be the spread of my own body, or any part of it.[2]

[1] 1855 reads "This head is more than churches or bibles or creeds." 1866 reads "This head is more than churches, bibles, creeds."

[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "If I worship any particular thing, it shall be some of the spread of my own body."

Translucent mould of me, it shall be you!
Shaded ledges and rests, it shall be you![1]
Firm masculine colter, it shall be you.

Whatever goes to the tilth of me, it shall be you!
You my rich blood! Your milky stream, pale strippings of my life.

Breast that presses against other breasts, it shall be you!
My brain, it shall be your occult convolutions.

Root of wash'd sweet flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
Trickling sap of maple! fibre of manly wheat! it shall be you!

Sun so generous, it shall be you!
Vapors lighting and shading my face, it shall be you!
You sweaty brooks and dews, it shall be you!
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me, it shall be you!
Broad, muscular fields! branches of live oak! loving lounger in my winding paths! it shall be you!
Hands I have taken—face I have kiss'd—mortal I have ever touch'd! it shall be you.

I dote on myself—there is that lot of me, and all so luscious;
Each moment, and whatever happens, thrills me with joy.

O I am wonderful![2]
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest wish;
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop![3] I pause to consider if it really be;[4]
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

[1] "it shall be you" added in 1860.
[2] Line 542 added in 1860, which reads, "O I am so wonderful."
[3] 1855 '56 read "To walk up my stoop is unaccountable," etc.
[4] 1855 '56 '60. After line 545 read "That I eat and drink is spectacle enough for the great authors and schools."

To behold the day-break!
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows;
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world, at innocent gambols, silently rising, freshly exuding,
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs;
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with—the daily close of their junction;
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head;
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

25

Dazzling and tremendous, how quick the sun-rise would kill me,
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend, dazzling and tremendous as the sun;
We found our own, O[1] my Soul, in the calm and cool of the daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach;
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds, and volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision—it is unequal to measure itself;
It provokes me forever;
It says sarcastically, *Walt, you contain enough*[2]*—why don't you let it out, then?*

Come now, I will not be tantalized—you conceive too much of articulation.

Do you not know, O speech,[3] how the buds beneath you are folded?
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost;
The dirt receding before my prophetical screams;

[1] "O" added in 1860.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "Walt, you understand enough," etc.
[3] "O speech" added in 1867.

I underlying causes, to balance them at last;
My knowledge my live parts—it keeping tally with the meaning of things,
HAPPINESS—which, whoever hears me, let him or her set out in search of this day.

My final merit I refuse you—I refuse putting from me what I really am;[1]
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me;
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.[2]

Writing and talk do not prove me;
I carry the plenum of proof, and everything else, in my face;
With the hush of my lips I wholly[3] confound the skeptic.

26

I think I will do nothing now but listen,[4]
To accrue what I hear into myself—to let sounds contribute toward me.[5]

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals;
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice;[6]
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following;[7]
Sounds of the city, and sounds out of the city—sounds of the day and night;
Talkative young ones to those that like them[8]—the loud laugh of work-people at their meals;
The angry base of disjointed friendship—the faint tones of the sick;
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing a death-sentence;
The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves—the refrain of the anchor-lifters;

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "I refuse putting from me the best I am."
[2] 1855 '56 read "I crowd your noisiest talk by looking toward you." 1860 reads "I crowd your sleekest talk," etc.
[3] "wholly" added in 1867. 1855 '56 '60 read "I confound the topmost skeptic."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read "I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen."
[5] 1855 reads "and accrue" "and let sounds."
[6] 1855 reads "I hear the sound of the human voice—a sound I love."
[7] 1855 '56 read "I hear all sounds as they are turned to their uses."
[8] 1855 '56 '60 add "the recitative of fish-pedlars and fruit pedlars."

The ring of alarm-bells—the cry of fire—the whirr of swift-streaking engines and hose-carts, with premonitory tinkles, and color'd lights;
The steam-whistle—the solid roll of the train of approaching cars;
The slow-march play'd at the head of the association, marching two and two,[1]
(They go to guard some corpse—the flag-tops are draped with black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello ('tis the young man's heart's complaint;[2])
I hear the key'd cornet[3]—it glides quickly in through my ears;
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus—it is a grand opera;[4]
Ah, this indeed is music! This suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me;
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano[5]—(what work, with hers, is this?)
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies;
It wrenches such ardors from me, I did not know I possess'd them;[6]
It sails me—I dab with bare feet—they are lick'd by the indolent waves;
I am exposed, cut by bitter and angry[7] hail—I lose my breath,[8]
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled[9] in fakes of death;
At length[10] let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
And that we call BEING.

[1] "marching two and two" added in 1860.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "or man's heart complaint."
[3] 1855 reads "I hear the keyed cornet or else the echoes of sunset." "It glides," etc., and line 595 added in 1856.
[4] 1855 '56 add "this indeed is music."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "she convulses me like the climax of my love-grip."
[6] 1855 reads "It wrenches unnamable ardors from my breast; It throbs me to gulps of the farthest down horror."
1856 '60 '67 read "The orchestra wrenches," etc.
[7] 1855 '56 '60 read "poisoned hail."
[8] "I lose my breath" added in 1867.
[9] 1855 '56. For "throttled" read "squeezed."
[10] "At length" added in 1860.

27

To be, in any form—what is that?
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither;)[1]
If nothing lay more develop'd, the quahaug in its callous shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell;
I have instant conductors all over me, whether I pass or stop;
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy;
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly different from myself;
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
Depriving me of my best, as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-fields,
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch, and go and graze at the edges of me;
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger;
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me;
They have left me helpless to a red marauder;
They all come to the headland, to witness and assist against me.

I am given up by traitors;

[1] Line 609 added in 1860.

I talk wildly—I have lost my wits—I and nobody else am the
greatest traitor;
I went myself first to the headland—my own hands carried me
there.

You villian touch! what are you doing? My breath is tight in
its throat;
Unclench your floodgates! you are too much for me.

29

Blind, loving, wrestling touch! sheath'd, hooded, sharp-tooth'd
touch!
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting, track'd by arriving—perpetual payment of perpetual
loan;
Rich, showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate—stand by the curb prolific and
vital:
Landscapes, projected, masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things;
They neither hasten their own delivery, nor resist it;
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon;
The insignificant is as big to me as any;
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince;
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so;
Only what nobody denies is so.

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain;
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for each
other,
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it
becomes omnific,
And until every one shall delight us, and we them.

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels,
And I could come every afternoon of my life to look at the farmer's girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking short-cake.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
And call anything close again, when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness;
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach;
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones;
In vain objects stand leagues off, and assume manifold shapes;
In vain the ocean settling in hollows, and the great monsters lying low;
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky;
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs;
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods;
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador;
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

32

I think I could turn and live with animals,[1] they are so placid and self-contain'd;
I stand and look at them long and long.[2]

[1] 1855 reads "live awhile with the animals."
[2] 1855 '56 read "I stand and look at them sometimes half the day long." 1860 reads "I stand and look at them sometimes an hour at a stretch."

They do not sweat and whine about their condition;
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;
Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented with the mania of owning things;
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth

So they show their relations to me, and I accept them;
They bring me tokens of myself—they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens:[1]
Did I pass that way[2] huge times ago, and negligently drop them?
Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them;
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers;
Picking out here one[3] that I love, and now go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses,
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,
Eyes[4] full of sparkling wickedness—ears finely cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate, as[5] my heels embrace him;
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure, as we race[6] around and return.

[1] 1855 '56 read "I do not know where they got those tokens." 1860 reads "get those tokens."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "I must have passed that way," etc.
[3] 1855 reads "Picking out here one that shall be my amie, chosing to go with him on brotherly terms." 1856 reads "Picking out here one that I love, chosing to go with on brotherly terms." 1860 reads "Picking out here one that I love, chosing to go with on brotherly terms."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "Eyes well apart, full," etc.
[5] "as" added in 1860.
[6] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "speed."

I but use you a moment, then I resign you, stallion;
Why do I need your paces, when I myself out-gallop them?[1]
Even, as I stand or sit, passing faster than you.[2]

33

O swift wind! O space and time! now I see it is true, what I guessed at;[3]
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass;
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me—I travel—I sail—my elbows rest in the sea-gaps;
I skirt the sierras—my palms cover continents;
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts—camping with lumbermen;
Along the ruts of the turnpike—along the dry gulch and rivulet bed;
Weeding my onion-patch,[4] or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips—crossing savannas—trailing in forests;
Prospecting—gold-digging—girdling the trees of a new purchase;
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand—hauling my boat down the shallow river;
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead—where the buck turns furiously at the hunter;
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock—where the otter is feeding on fish;
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou;
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey—where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped[5] tail;
Over the growing sugar—over the yellow-flower'd[6] cotton plant—over the rice in its low moist field;

[1] 1855 reads "And do not need your paces, and out-gallop them."
[2] 1855 reads "And myself as I stand or sit pass faster than you." 1856 reads "Myself as I stand or sit passing faster than you."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "Swift wind! Space! My Soul! Now I know it is true what I guessed at."
[4] 1855 reads "Hoeing my onion-patch, and rows of carrots," etc.
[5] "shaped" added in 1867.
[6] "yellow-flowered" added in 1867.

Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots from the gutters;
Over the western persimmon—over the long-leav'd corn—over the delicate blue-flower flax;
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there with the rest;
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the breeze;
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low scragged limbs;
Walking the path worn in the grass, and beat through the leaves of the brush;
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-lot;
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month[1] eve—where the great gold-bug drops through the dark;
Where flails keep time on the barn floor;
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and flows to the meadow;
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their hides;
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen—where andirons straddle the hearth-slab—where cobwebs fall in festoons from the rafters;
Where trip-hammers crash—where the press is whirling its cylinders;
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs;[2]
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it myself, and looking composedly down;)
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose—where the heat hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand;
Where the she-whale swims with her calf, and never forsakes it;
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of smoke;
Where the fin of the shark cuts[3] like a black chip out of the water;
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,
Where shells grow to her slimy deck—where the dead are corrupting below;

[1] 1855 '56 read "July eve."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "out of its ribs."
[3] 1855 '56 read "Where the ground-shark's fin cuts," etc.

Where the dense-starr'd[1] flag is borne at the head of the regiments;
Approaching Manhattan, up by the long-stretching island;
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance;
Upon a door-step—upon the horse-block of hard wood outside;
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs, or a good game of base-ball;
At he-festivals, with blackguard jibes, ironical license, bull-dances, drinking, laughter;
At the cider-mill, tasting the sweets of the brown mash,[2] sucking the juice through a straw;
At apple-peelings, wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find;
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raisings:
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles, screams, weeps;
Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard—where the dry-stalks are scattered—where the brood-cow waits in the hovel;
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work—where the stud to the mare—where the cock is treading the hen;
Where the heifers browse—where geese nip their food with short jerks;
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome prairie;
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles far and near;
Where the humming-bird shimmers—where the neck of the long-lived swan is curving and winding;
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the[3] shore, where she laughs her near-human laugh;
Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden, half hid by the high weeds;
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with their heads out;
Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery;
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled trees;
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs;
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon;

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "Where the striped and starred flag," etc.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "squash."
[3] 1855 reads "by the slappy shore and laughs," etc.

Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over the well;
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves;
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs;
Through the gymnasium—through the curtain'd saloon—through the office or public hall;
Pleas'd with the native, and pleas'd with the foreign—pleas'd with the new and old;
Pleas'd with women, the homely as well as the handsome;
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously;
Pleas'd with the[1] tune of the choir of the white-wash'd church;
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, or any preacher—impress'd[2] seriously at the camp-meeting:
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon —flatting[3] the flesh of my nose on the thick plate-glass;
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds,
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the middle:
Coming home with the silent[4] and dark-cheek'd bush-boy—(behind me he rides at the drape of the day;)
Far from the settlements, studying the print of animals' feet, or the moccasin print;
By the cot in the hospital, reaching lemonade to a feverish patient;
Nigh[5] the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle:
Voyaging to every port, to dicker and adventure;
Hurrying with the modern crowd, as eager and fickle as any;
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him;
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while;
Walking the old hills of Judea, with the beautiful gentle God by my side;
Speeding through space—speeding through heaven and the stars;

[1] 1855 reads "primitive tunes."
[2] 1855 '56 read "looking seriously."
[3] 1855 '56 read "pressing."
[4] 1855 '56 read "bearded."
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "By the coffin'd," etc.

Speeding amid the seven satellites, and the broad ring, and the diameter of eighty thousand miles;
Speeding with tail'd meteors—throwing fire-balls like the rest;
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its belly;
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing;
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres,[1] and look at the product:
And look at quintillions ripen'd, and look at quintillions green.

I fly the flight of the fluid and swallowing soul;
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial;
No guard can shut me off, nor law prevent me.[2]

I anchor my ship for a little while only;
My messengers continually cruise away, or bring their returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal—leaping chasms with a pike-pointed staff—clinging to topples of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck;
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest;
We sail[3] the arctic sea—it is plenty light enough;
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the wonderful beauty;
The enormous masses of ice pass me, and I pass them—the scenery is plain in all directions;
The white-topt mountains show[4] in the distance—I fling out my fancies toward them;
(We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are soon to be engaged;
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment—we pass with still feet and caution;

[1] 1855 reads "orchards of God, and look at the spheric product."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "no law can prevent me."
[3] 1855 '56 read "We sail through," etc.
[4] 1855 reads "mountains point up," etc.

Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city;
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living cities of the globe.)

I am a free companion—I bivouac by invading watchfires.

I turn the bridegroom out of bed, and stay with the bride myself;
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs;
They fetch my man's body up, dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,
The courage of present times and all times;
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steam-ship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm;
How he knuckled tight, and gave not back one inch, and was faithful of days and faithful of nights,
And chalk'd in large letters, on a board, *Be of good cheer, we will not desert you:*
How he follow'd with them, and tack'd with them—and would not give it up;[1]
How he saved the drifting company at last:
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the side of their prepared graves;
How the silent old-faced infants, and the lifted sick, and the sharp-lipp'd unshaved men:
All this I swallow—it tastes good—I like it well—it becomes mine;
I am the man—I suffer'd—I was there.

The disdain and calmness of olden[2] martyrs;
The mother, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood, her children gazing on;
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat;
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck—the murderous buckshot and the bullets;
All these I feel, or am.

[1] Line 826 added in 1860.
[2] "olden" added in 1870.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen;
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin;
I fall on the weeds and stones;
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,
Taunt my dizzy ears, and beat me violently over the head with whip-stocks.[1]

Agonies are one of my changes of garments;
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels— I myself become the wounded person;
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken;
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris;
Heat and smoke I inspired—I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades;
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels;
They have clear'd the beams away—they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt—the pervading hush is for my sake;
Painless after all I lie, exhausted but not so unhappy;
White and beautiful are the faces around me—the heads are bared of their fire-caps;
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate;
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me—I am the clock myself.

I am an old artillerist—I tell of my fort's bombardment;
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers;[2]

[1] 1855 reads "They taunt my dizzy ears, they beat, etc. . . . . with their whip-stocks."

[2] 1855 reads "Again the reveille of drummers, again the attacking cannon and mortars and howitzers." 1856 '60 read "Again the reveille of drummers, again the attacking cannon, mortars, howitzers."

Again the attacking cannon, mortars;
Again, to my listening ears, the cannon responsive.[1]

I take part—I see and hear the whole;
The cries, curses, roar—the plaudits for well-aim'd shots;
The ambulanza slowly passing, trailing its red drip;
Workmen searching after damages, making[2] indispensable repairs;
The fall of grenades through the rent roof—the fan-shaped explosion;
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general—he furiously waves with his hand;
He gasps through the clot, *Mind not me—mind—the entrenchments.*

34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth;[3]
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo;)[4]
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young men.[5]

Retreating, they had form'd in a hollow square, with their baggage for breastworks;
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times their number, was the price they took in advance;
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone;
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and seal, gave up their arms, and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers;
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,

[1] 1855 reads "Again the attacked send their cannon responsive." 1856 '60 omit "their." 1870 reads "Again the cannon responsive."
[2] 1855 reads "and to make."
[3] Line 870 added in 1867.
[4] After line 873, 1855 '56 read "Hear now the tale of a jet-black sunrise."
[5] 1855 '56 read "Hear now the murder in cold blood," etc. 1860 reads "Hear now the tale of the murder in cold blood," etc.

Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,[1]
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day[2] morning they were brought out in squads, and massacred—it was beautiful early summer;
The work commenced about five o'clock, and was over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel;
Some made a mad and helpless rush—some stood stark and straight;
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart—the living and dead lay together;
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt—the newcomers saw them there;
Some, half-kill'd, attempted to crawl away;
These were despatch'd with bayonets, or batter'd with the blunts of muskets;
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came to release him;
The three were all torn, and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies:
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men.[3]

35

Would you hear of an old-fashion'd sea-fight?[4]
Would[5] you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?
List to the story as my grandmother's father, the sailor, told it to me.[6]

Our foe was no skulk in his ship, I tell you, (said he;)[7]

[1] 1855 '56 read "Large, turbulent, brave, handsome, generous, proud and affectionate." 1860 '70 read "Large, turbulent, generous, brave, handsome, proud and affectionate."
[2] 1855 '56 read "Sunday."
[3] 1855 '56. After line 895 read "And that was a jet-black sunrise."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read "Did you read in the sea-books of an old-fashioned frigate-fight?"
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "Did you learn," etc.
[6] Line 898 added in 1867.
[7] "(said he;)" added in 1867.

His was the surly English pluck—and there is no tougher or truer, and never was, and never will be;
Along the lower'd eve he came, horribly raking us.

We closed with him—the yards entangled—the cannon touch'd;
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water;
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first fire, killing all around, and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark;[1]
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up,[2] our leaks on the gain, and five feet of water reported;
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-hold, to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is[3] now stopt by the sentinels,
They see[4] so many strange faces, they do not know whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire;[5]
The other asks[6] if we demand quarter?
If our colors are struck, and the fighting is[7] done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,[8]
We have not struck, he composedly cries, *we have just begun our part of the fighting*.

Only three guns are in use;
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's mainmast;
Two, well served with grape and canister, silence[9] his musketry and clear[10] his decks.

[1] Line 906 added in 1867.
[2] "well up" added in 1867.
[3] 1855 '56 '60. For "is" read "was."
[4] 1855 '56 '60. For "see" read "saw."
[5] 1855 '56 '60. Read "was afire."
[6] 1855 '56 '60. For "asks" read "asked."
[7] 1855 '56 '60. Omit "is."
[8] 1855 '56 '60 read "I laughed content when I heard the voice of my little captain," and so, to line 942, the early editions read in the past tense. 1867 reads "Now I laugh," etc., adding to end of line "(says my grandmother's father.)"
[9] 1855 '56 '60 read "silenced." [10] 1855 '56 '60 read "cleared."

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially the main-top;
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease;
The leaks gain fast on the pumps—the fire eats toward the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away—it is generally thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain;
He is not hurried—his voice is neither high nor low;
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve at night, there in the beams of the moon, they surrender to us.[1]

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight;
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness;
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking—preparations to pass to the one we have conquer'd;
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through a countenance white as a sheet;
Near by, the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin;
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully curl'd whiskers;
The flames, spite of all that can be done, flickering aloft and below;
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty;
Formless stacks of bodies, and bodies by themselves—dabs of flesh upon the masts and spars,
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of waves,
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong scent,
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long, dull, tapering groan;
These so—these irretrievable.

[1] 1867 reads, after line 927, "O now it is not my grandmother's father there in the fight; I feel it is I myself."

37

O Christ![1] This is mastering me!
In at the[2] conquer'd doors they crowd. I am possess'd.

I embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering;[3]
See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep watch;
It is I let out in the morning, and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail, but I am handcuff'd to him and walk by his side;
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one, with sweat on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny, but I go up too, and am tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp, but I also lie at the last gasp;
My face is ash-color'd—my sinews gnarl—away from me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me, and I am embodied in them;
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.[4]

[1] 1855 '56. For lines 943–4 read "O Christ! my fit is mastering me!
What the rebel said gaily adjusting his throat to the rope-noose,
What the savage at the stump, his eye-sockets empty, his mouth spirting whoops and defiance,
What stills the traveler come to the vault at Mount Vernon.
What sobers the Brooklyn boy as he looks down on the shores of the Wallabout and remembers the prison ships,
What burst the guns of the redcoat at Saratoga when he surrendered his brigades,
These become mine and me every one, and they are but little.
I become as much more as I like."
1860 reads "O Christ! This is mastering me!
Through the conquered doors they crowd. I am possessed."
Then follows as in 1855 '56.
1867 reads ' Through the conquered," etc.
1855 '56 '60 read "I become any presence or truth of humanity here."
1855'56. After line 956 read "I rise extatic through all and sweep with the true gravitation,
The whirling and whirling is elemental within me."
1860 reads "Enough—I bring such to a close,
Rise extatic through all," etc., as in 1855 '56.

38

Enough! enough! enough![1]
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams, gaping;
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears, and the blows of the bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and bloody crowning.

I remember now;
I resume the overstaid fraction;
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or to any graves;
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.[2]

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average unending procession;[3]
Inland and sea-coast we go,[4] and we pass all boundary lines;
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth;
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of years.[5]

Eleves, I salute you! come forward![6]
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

[1] Line 957 added in 1867.
[2] 1855 '56 read "roll away."
[3] 1855. After line 968 reads "We walk the roads of Ohio and Massachusetts and Virginia and Wisconsin and New York and New Orleans and Texas and Montreal and San Francisco and Charleston and Savannah and Mexico." 1856 '60 same as above, with changes in arrangement.
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read "Inland and by the sea-coast and boundary lines," etc.
[5] 1855 '56 '60 read "growth of two thousand years."
[6] 1855 '56 '60 read "Elves, I salute you,
I see the approach of your numberless gangs, I see you understand yourselves and me,
And know that they who have eyes are divine, and the blind and lame are equally divine,
And that my steps drag behind yours yet go before them
And are aware that I am with you no more than I am with everybody."

39

The friendly and flowing savage, Who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it, and mastering it?

Is he some south-westerner, rais'd out-doors? Is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?
the mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or from the sea?

Wherever he goes, men and women accept and desire him;
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,
stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd
head, laughter, and naiveté,
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and emanations;
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers;
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath—they fly
out of the glance of his eyes.

40

Flaunt of the sunshine, I need not your bask,—lie over!
You light surfaces only—I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands;
Say, old Top-knot! what do you want?

Man or woman! I might tell how I like you, but cannot;
And might tell what it is in me, and what it is in you, but
cannot;
And might tell that pining I have—that pulse of my nights and
days.

Behold! I do not give lectures, or a little charity;
When I give, I give myself.[1]

You there, impotent, loose in the knees!
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you;
Spread your palms, and lift the flaps of your pockets;
I am not to be denied—I compel—I have stores plenty and to
spare;
And anything I have I bestow.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "What I give I give out of myself."

I do not ask who you are—that is not so important to me;
You can do nothing, and be nothing, but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean;
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear, I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes;
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying—thither I speed, and twist the knob of the door;
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed;
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man, and raise him with resistless will.

O despairer, here is my neck;
By God! you shall not go down! Hang your whole weight upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath—I buoy you up;
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep! I and they keep guard all night;
Not doubt—not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you;
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself;
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is so.

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs;
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe;
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years:
It is middling well as far as it goes,—But is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,[1]

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After line 1023 read "The most they offer for mankind and eternity, less than a spirt of my own seminal wet."

Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,[1]
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson;
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,[2]
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix engraved,
With Odin, and the hideous-faced Mexitli, and every idol and image;
Taking[3] them all for what they are worth, and not a cent more;
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days;
(They bore mites, as for unfledg'd birds, who have now to rise and fly and sing for themselves;)
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself—bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see;
Discovering as much, or more, in a framer framing a house;
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves, driving the mallet and chisel;
Not objecting to special revelations—considering a curl of smoke, or a hair on the back of my hand, just as curious as any revelation;
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less[4] to me than the Gods of the antique wars;
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths—their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames:
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for every person born;
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists;
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come,
Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother, and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me, and not filling the square rod then;
The bull and the bug never worship'd half enough;
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd;
The supernatural of no account—myself waiting my time to be one of the Supremes;

[1] 1855 adds "and laying them away."
[2] 1855 for "Buddha" reads "Adonia."
[3] 1855 reads "Honestly taking."
[4] 1855 reads "more to me."

The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the best, and be as prodigious:[1]
By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator;
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows.

42

A call in the midst of the crowd;
My own voice, orotund, sweeping, and final.

Come my children;
Come my boys and girls, my women, household, and intimates;
Now the performer launches his nerve—he has pass'd his prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written, loose-finger'd chords! I feel the thrum of your[2] climax and close.

My head slues round[3] on my neck;
Music rolls, but not from the organ;
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard, unsunk ground;
Ever the eaters and drinkers—ever the upward and downward sun—ever the air and the ceaseless tides;
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real;
Ever the old inexplicable query—ever that thorn'd thumb—that breath of itches and thirsts;
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides, and bring him forth;
Ever love—ever the sobbing liquid of life;
Ever the bandage under the chin—ever the tressels of death.

Here and there, with dimes on the eyes, walking;
To feed the greed of the belly, the brains liberally spooning;
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going;
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment receiving;
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After line 1048 read "Guessing when I am it will not tickle me much to receive puffs out of pulpit or print."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "their climax and close."
[3] 1855 reads "evolves on my neck."

This is the city, and I am one of the citizens;
Whatever interests the rest interests me—politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools,[1]
Benevolent societies, improvements, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories,[2] stocks, stores, real estate, and personal estate.

The little plentiful mannikins, skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,[3]
I am aware who they are—(they are positively[4] not worms or fleas.)

I acknowledge the duplicates of myself[5]—the weakest and shallowest is deathless with me;
What I do and say, the same waits for them;
Every thought that flounders in me, the same flounders in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism;
I know my omnivorous lines,[6] and will not[7] write any less;
And would fetch you, whoever you are, flush with myself.

No words of routine are mine,[8]
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond, yet nearer bring:
This printed and bound book—but the printer, and the printing-office boy?[9]
The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms?
The black ship, mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets—but the pluck of the captain and engineers?[10]

[1] 1855 reads "politics, churches, newspapers, schools." 1856 '60 '67 read "politics, markets, newspapers, schools."
[2] 1866 reads "markets."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "They who piddle and patter here in collars and tailed coats, I am aware who they are, they are not worms or fleas."
[4] 1867. For "positively" reads "actually."
[5] 1855 adds "under all the scrape-lipped and pipe-legged concealments."
[6] 1855 '56 '60 read "I know my omnivorous words, and I cannot say any less."
[7] 1867 reads "cannot write any less."
[8] 1855 '56 read "My words are words of a questioning, and to indicate reality." 1860 adds to above "and motive power."
[9] 1855 '56. After line 1085 read "The marriage estate and settlement, but the body and mind of the bridegroom? also those of the bride? The Panorama of the sea, but the sea itself?"
[10] 1855 '56 '60 read "The fleet of ships of the line and all the modern improvements—but the craft and pluck of the admiral?"

In the houses,[1] the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?
The sky up there—yet here, or next door, or across the way?
The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?
Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,
And what is[2] reason? and what is love? and what is life?

43

I do not despise you, priests;
My faith is the greatest of faiths, and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern, and all between ancient and modern,
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the Gods, saluting the sun,
Making a fetish of the first rock or stump, powwowing with sticks in the circle of obis,
Helping the lama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession—rapt and austere in the woods, a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cup—to Shastas and Vedas admirant—minding the Koran,
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels—accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling, or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew,
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit arouses me,
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and land,
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang, I turn and talk, like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters, dull and excluded,

[1] "In the houses" added in 1867.
[2] 1855 '56 read "And what is called reason? and what is called love? and what is called life?"

Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, disheartened, atheistical;
I know every one of you[1]—I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief.

How the flukes splash!
How they contort, rapid as lightning, with spasms, and spouts of blood!

Be at peace, bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers;
I take my place among you as much as among any;
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,[2]
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all, precisely the same.[3]

I do not know what is untried and afterward;
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.[4]

Each who passes is consider'd—each who stops is consider'd—not a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew back, and was never seen again,
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with bitterness worse than gall,
Nor him in the poor house, tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd—nor the brutish koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,
Nor anything in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth,
Nor anything in the myriads of spheres—nor one of the myriads of myriads that inhabit them,
Nor the present—nor the least wisp that is known.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "I know every one of you—I know the unspoken interrogatories,
By experience I know them."

[2] 1855. After line 1117 reads "And the day and night are for you and me and all." 1856 '60 read "Day and night are for you, me, all."

[3] "precisely the same" added in 1856.

[4] 1855 reads "But I know it is sure and alive and sufficient." 1856 '60 read "But I know it is sure alive sufficient."

44

It is time to explain myself—Let us stand up.

What is known I strip away;
I launch all men and women forward with me into THE UNKNOWN.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?[1]

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers;
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller;
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my sister?
I am sorry for you—they are not murderous or jealous upon me;
All has been gentle with me—I keep no account with lamentation;
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs;
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps;
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me;
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing[2]—I know I was even there;
I waited unseen and always, and slept[3] through the lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

[1] 1855 '56 read, after line 1134, "Eternity lies in bottomless reservoirs, its buckets are rising forever and ever,
They pour and they pour and they exhale away."

[2] 1855. After "Nothing" reads "the vapor from the nostrils of death."

[3] 1855 reads "and slept while God carried me through the lethargic mist."

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen;
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings;
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother, generations guided me;
My embryo has never been torpid—nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths, and deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me;
Now on this spot I stand[1] with my robust Soul.

45

O span of youth! Ever-push'd elasticity!
O manhood, balanced, florid, and full.

My lovers suffocate me!
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,
Jostling me through streets and public halls—coming naked to me at night,
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river—swinging and chirping over my head,
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,[2]
Lighting on every moment of my life,
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts, and giving them to be mine.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "Now I stand on this spot," etc.

[2] 1855 '56 '60. After line 1173 read "Or while I swim in the bath, or drink from the pump at the corner—or the curtain is down at the opera, or I glimpse at a woman's face in the railroad car."

Old age superbly rising! O welcome,[1] ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself—it promulges what grows after and out of itself,
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see, multiplied as high as I can cipher, edge but the rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward, and forever outward.

My sun has his sun, and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage, and never can be stoppage;
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,[2] were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run;
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And as surely go as much farther — and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span, or make it impatient;
They are but parts—anything is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that;
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed[3]—it is certain;[4]
The Lord will be there, and wait till I come, on perfect terms;
(The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine, will be there.)[5]

[1] "O welcome" added in 1860.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "and all the palpable life, were this moment," etc.
[3] 1855 reads "Our rendezvous is fitly appointed, God will be there and wait till we come."
[4] "it is certain" added in 1867.
[5] Line 1197 added in 1867.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured, and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey—(come listen all !)[1]
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods ;
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair ;
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy ;
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, or exchange ;
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents, and a plain public road.

Not I—not any one else, can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far—it is within reach ;
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born, and did not know ;
Perhaps it is every where on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds, dear son,[2] and I will mine, and let us hasten forth,
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand on my hip,
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me ;
For after we start, we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill, and look'd at the crowded heaven,
And I said to my Spirit, *When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of everything in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then ?*
And my Spirit said, *No, we but*[3] *level that lift, to pass and continue beyond.*

[1] "(come listen all !)" added in 1867.
[2] "dear son" added in 1867.
[3] "but" added in 1867.

You are also asking me questions, and I hear you ;
I answer that I cannot answer—you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while, dear son ;[1]
Here are biscuits to eat, and here is milk to drink ;
But as soon as you sleep, and renew yourself in sweet clothes,
I[2] kiss you with a good-bye kiss, and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams ;
Now I wash the gum from your eyes ;
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light, and of every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded, holding a plank by the shore ;
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

47

I am the teacher of athletes ;
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own, proves the width of my own ;
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man, not through derived power, but in his own right,
Wicked, rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
Unrequited love, or a slight, cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,[3]
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff, to sing a song, or play on the banjo,
Preferring scars, and the beard, and faces pitted with small-pox, over all latherers,
And those well tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.[4]

[1] 1855 '56 '60 for "dear son" read "wayfarer."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "I will certainly kiss you," etc.
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "worse than a wound cuts."
[4] 1855 '56 '60. For lines 1239–40 read "Preferring scars and faces pitted with small-pox over all latherers and those that keep out of the sun."

I teach straying from me—yet who can stray from me?
I follow you, whoever you are, from the present hour;
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar, or to fill up the time while I wait for a boat;
It is you talking just as much as myself—I act as the tongue of you;
Tied[1] in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.

I swear I will never again[2] mention love or death inside a house,
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me, go to the heights or water shore;
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key;
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me—he knows me well;
The woodman, that takes his axe and jug with him, shall take me with him all day;
The farm-boy, ploughing in the field, feels good at the sound of my voice;
In vessels that sail, my words[3] sail—I go with fishermen and seamen, and love them.

The soldier camp'd, or upon the march, is mine;
On the night ere the pending battle, many seek me, and I do not fail them;
On the solemn night (it may be their last,) those that know me, seek me.[4]

My face rubs to the hunter's face, when he lies down alone in his blanket;

[1] 1855 '56 read "It was tied," etc.
[2] "again" added in 1860.
[3] 1855 reads "words must sail," etc.
[4] Lines 1258–59–60 added in 1867.

The driver, thinking of me, does not mind the jolt of his wagon;
The young mother and old mother comprehend me;
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment, and forget where they are;
They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul;
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy, walks to his own funeral, drest in his shroud,
And I or you, pocketless of a dime, may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye, or show a bean in its pod, confounds the learning of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman,[1] Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.

And I say[2] to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I, who am curious about each, am not curious about God;
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God, and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then;
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass;
I find letters from God dropt in the street—and every one is sign'd by God's name,

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "And any man or woman shall stand cool and supercilious before a million universes."
[2] 1855 '56 '60. For "say" read "call."

And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,[1]
Others will punctually come forever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes;
I see the elder-hand, pressing, receiving, supporting;
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you, Corpse, I think you are good manure—but that does not offend me;
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips—I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths;
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there, O stars of heaven;
O suns! O grass of graves! O perpetual transfers and promotions!
If you do not say anything, how can I say anything?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk! toss on the black stems that decay in the muck!
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night;
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected;[2]
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.

[1] "wheresoe'er I go" added in 1867.

[2] 1855 reads "And perceive of the ghastly glitter the sunbeams reflected." 1856 reads "And perceive of the ghastly glimmer the sunbeams reflected." 1860 reads "I perceive of the ghastly glimmer the sunbeams reflected."

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes;
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid;
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on;
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers and sisters.

Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is HAPPINESS.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! Here, you! What have you to confide to me?
Look in my face, while I snuff the sidle of evening;
Talk honestly—no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.

Do I contradict myself?
Very well, then, I contradict myself;
(I am large—I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh—I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? Who will soonest be through with his supper?
Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? Will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me—he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed—I too am untranslatable;
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me;
It flings my likeness after the rest, and true as any, on the shadow'd wilds;
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air—I shake my white locks at the runaway sun;
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love;
If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am, or what I mean;
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged;
Missing me one place, search another;
I stop somewhere, waiting for you.

LAWS FOR CREATIONS.

First published in 1860 as No. 13 "Chants Democratic."

Laws for Creations,
For strong artists and leaders—for fresh broods of teachers, and perfect literats for America,
For noble savans, and coming musicians.

All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and the compact truth of the world;
There shall be no subject too pronounced—All works shall illustrate the divine law of indirections.[1]

[1] 1860. For lines 4 and 5 reads:
"There shall be no subject but it shall be treated with reference to the ensemble of the world, and the compact truth of the world—And no coward or copyist shall be allowed;

What do you suppose Creation is?
What do you suppose will satisfy the Soul, except to walk free, and own no superior?
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways, but that man or woman is as good as God?
And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself?
And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally mean?
And that you or any one must approach Creations through such laws?

VISOR'D.

First published in 1860.

A MASK—a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,
Concealing her face, concealing her form,
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

There shall be no subject too pronounced—All works shall illustrate the divine law of indirections;
There they stand—I see them already, each poised and in its place,
Statements, models, censuses, poems, dictionaries, biographies, essays, theories—How complete! How relative and interfused! No one supersedes another;
They do not seem to me like the old specimens,
They seem to me like Nature at last, (America has given birth to them, and I have also;)
They seem to me at last as perfect as the animals, and as the rocks and weeds—fitted to them,
Fitted to the sky, to float with floating clouds—to rustle among the trees with rustling leaves,
To stretch with stretched and level waters, where ships silently sail in the distance."

CHILDREN OF ADAM.

TO THE GARDEN, THE WORLD.

First published in 1860.

To THE garden, the world, anew ascending,
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,
Curious, here behold my resurrection, after slumber;
The revolving cycles, in their wide sweep, have brought me again,
Amorous, mature—all beautiful to me—all wondrous;
My limbs, and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for reasons, most wondrous;
Existing, I peer and penetrate still,
Content with the present—content with the past,
By my side, or back of me, Eve following,
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

FROM PENT-UP ACHING RIVERS.

First published in 1860.

FROM pent-up, aching rivers;[1]
From that of myself, without which I were nothing;
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I stand sole among men;
From my own voice resonant—singing the phallus,
Singing the song of procreation,
Singing the need of superb children, and therein superb grown people,
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,
Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!
O for any and each, the body correlative attracting!

[1] "From pent-up, aching rivers" added in 1867. See also note at line 10.

O for you, whoever you are, your correlative body! O it, more than all else, you delighting!)[1]
—From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day;
From native moments—from bashful pains—singing them;
Singing something yet unfound, though I have diligently sought it, many a long year;[2]
Singing the true song of the Soul, fitful, at random;
Singing what, to the Soul, entirely redeem'd her, the faithful one, even[3] the prostitute, who detain'd me when I went to the city;
Singing the song of prostitutes;
Renascent with grossest Nature, or among animals;
Of that—of them, and what goes with them, my poems informing;
Of the smell of apples and lemons—of the pairing of birds,
Of the wet of woods—of the lapping of waves,
Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land—I them chanting;
The overture lightly sounding—the strain anticipating;
The welcome nearness—the sight of the perfect body;
The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on his back lying and floating;
The female form approaching—I, pensive, love-flesh tremulous, aching;[4]
The divine list, for myself or you, or for any one, making;
The face—the limbs—the index from head to foot, and what it arouses;
The mystic deliria—the madness amorous—the utter abandonment;
(Hark close, an still, what I now whisper to you,
I love you—O you entirely possess me,
O I wish that you and I escape from the rest, and go utterly off—O free and lawless,
Two hawks in the air—two fishes swimming in the sea not more lawless than we;)
—The furious storm through me careering—I passionately trembling;
The oath of the inseparableness of two together—of the woman that loves me, and whom I love more than my life—that oath swearing;

[1] After line 10, 1860, reads "From the pent-up rivers of myself."
[2] 1860 reads "ten thousand years."
[3] "even" added in 1867.
[4] 1860–'67. After line 25 read "The slave's body for sale—I sternly with harsh voice auctioneering."

(O I willingly stake all, for you!
O let me be lost, if it must be so!
O you and I—what is it to us what the rest do or think?
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other, and exhaust each other, if it must be so:)
—From the master—the pilot I yield the vessel to;
The general commanding me, commanding all—from him permission taking;
From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too long, as it is;)
From sex—From the warp and from the woof;
(To talk to the perfect girl who understands me,[1]
To waft to her these from my own lips—to effuse them from my own body;)
From privacy—from frequent repinings alone;
From plenty of persons near, and yet the right person not near;
From the soft sliding of hands over me, and thrusting of fingers through my hair and beard;
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom;
From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk, fainting with excess;
From what the divine husband knows—from the work of fatherhood;
From exultation, victory, and relief—from the bedfellow's embrace in the night;
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips, and bosoms,
From the cling of the trembling arm,
From the bending curve and the clinch,
From side by side, the pliant coverlid off-throwing,
From the one so unwilling to have me leave—and me just as unwilling to leave,
(Yet a moment, O tender waiter, and I return;)
—From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,
From the night, a moment, I, emerging, flitting out,
Celebrate you, act divine—and you, children prepared for,[2]
And you, stalwart loins.

[1] 1860 reads "who understands me—the girl of The States."
[2] 1860 reads "Celebrate you, *enfans* prepared for."

I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC.

First published in 1855. In 1856 under title of "Poem of the Body."

1

I SING the Body electric ;[1]
The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth them ;[2]
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,[3]
And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the Soul.[4]

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves ?[5]
And if[6] those who defile[7] the living are as bad as they who defile[8] the dead ?
And if the body does not do as much as the Soul ?[9]
And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul ?

2

The love of the Body of man or woman balks account—the body itself balks account ;[10]
That of[11] the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of the face balks account ;[12]

[1] "I sing the body electric" added in 1867. 1860 reads "O my children ! O mates !"

[2] 1855 '56 read "The bodies of men and women engirth me and I engirth them." 1860 reads "O the bodies of you, and of all men and women engirth me," etc.

[3] 1855 reads "and responds to them and love them." 1856 reads "respond to them love them."

[4] Line 4, added in 1860, reads "And respond to the contact of them, and discorrupt them," etc.

[5] 1855 reads "Was it doubted if those who corrupt their own live bodies conceal themselves ?" 1856 reads "Was it dreamed whether those who corrupted their own live bodies could conceal themselves ?" 1860 reads same as '56, omitting "live."

[6] 1855. For "if" reads "whether." [7,8] 1855. For "defile" read "defiled."

[9] Lines 7 and 8 added in 1856.

[10] 1855 '56 read "The expression of the body of man or woman balks account."

[11] "That of" added in 1860.

[12] Line 11 added in 1860.

But[1] the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face;
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists;
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees—dress does not hide him;
The strong, sweet, supple quality he has, strikes through the cotton and flannel;
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more;
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass in the street, the contour of their shape downwards,
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims through the[2] transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up, and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of the water,[3]
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats—the horseman in his saddle,
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,[4]
The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,
The female soothing a child—the farmer's daughter in the garden or cow-yard,
The[5] young fellow hoeing corn—the sleigh-driver guiding his six horses through the crowd,
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at sundown, after work,
The coats[6] and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and resistance,

[1] "But" added in 1860.

[2] 1855 reads "the salt transparent green-shine, or lies on his back, and rolls silently with the heave of the water."
Above reading adopted in 1856 except "to and fro" added in 1860.

[3] 1855. After line 19 reads "Framers bare-armed framing a house, hoisting the beams in their places or using the mallet and mortising chisel."

[4] 1855 reads "in all their exquisite offices."

[5] 1855 reads "The woodman rapidly swinging his axe in the woods, the young fellow," etc.

[6] 1855 reads "The coats, vests and caps," etc.

The upper-hold and the under-hold, the hair rumpled over and blinding the eyes;
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and waist-straps,[1]
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes—the bent head, the curv'd neck, and the counting;
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the mother's breast with the little child,
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in line with the firemen, and pause, listen, and count.

3

I know a man, a common farmer—the father of five sons;[2]
And in them were the fathers of sons—and in them were the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person;
The shape of his head,[3] the pale yellow and white of his hair and beard, and the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes—the richness and breadth of his manners,
These I used to go and visit him to see—he was wise also;
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old—his sons were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome;
They and his daughters loved him—all who saw him loved him;
They did not love him by allowance—they loved him with personal love;
He drank water only—the blood show'd like scarlet through the clear-brown skin of his face;
He was a frequent gunner and fisher—he sail'd his boat himself—he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner—he had fowling-pieces, presented to him by men that loved him;
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous of the gang.

[1] 1855 reads "waistbands."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "he was a common farmer, he was the father of five sons."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "The shape of his head, the richness and breadth of his manners," etc.

You would wish long and long to be with him—you would wish to sit by him in the boat, that you and he might touch each other.

4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough,
To pass among them, or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment—what is this, then?
I do not ask any more delight—I swim in it, as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women, and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well;
All things please the soul—but these please the soul well.

5

This is the female form;
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot;
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction!
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor—all falls aside but myself and it;
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, the atmosphere and the[1] clouds, and what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed;
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it—the response likewise ungovernable;
Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands, all diffused—mine too diffused;
Ebb stung by the flow, and flow stung by the ebb—love-flesh swelling and deliciously aching;
Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice;
Bridegroom night of love, working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn;
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

[1] 1855 reads "fringed clouds," etc.

This is the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, the man is born of woman;
This is the bath of birth—this is the merge of small and large, and the outlet again.

Be not ashamed, women—your privilege encloses the rest, and is the exit of the rest;
You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities, and tempers them—she is in her place, and moves with perfect balance;
She is all things duly veil'd—she is both passive and active;
She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in nature;
As I see through a mist, one with inexpressible completeness and beauty,
See the bent head, and arms folded over the breast—the female I see.[1]

6

The male is not less the soul, nor more—he too is in his place;
He too is all qualities—he is action and power;
The flush of the known universe is in him;
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become him well;
The wildest[2] largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that is utmost, become him well—pride is for him;
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul;
Knowledge becomes him—he likes it always—he brings everything to the test of himself;
Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail, he strikes soundings at last only here;
(Where else does he strike soundings, except here?)

[1] 1855 '56. After line 73 read "I see the bearer of the great fruit which is immortality, the good thereof is not tasted by roues, and never can be."

1855 '56. For "wildest" read "fiercest."

The man's body is sacred, and the woman's body is sacred ;
No matter who it is, it is sacred ;[1]
Is it a slave? Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the wharf?
Each belongs here or anywhere, just as much as the well-off—just as much as you ;
Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession ;
The universe is a procession, with measured and beautiful motion.)

Do you know so much yourself,[2] that you call the slave or the dull-face ignorant?
Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or she has no right to a sight?
Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float—and the soil is on the surface, and water runs, and vegetation sprouts,
For you only,[3] and not for him and her?

7

A man's Body at auction ;[4]
I help the auctioneer—the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen, look on this wonder![5]
Whatever the bids of the bidders, they cannot be high enough for it ;
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years, without one animal or plant ;
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this[6] head the all-baffling brain ;
In it and below it, the makings of heroes.[7]

[1] Line 83 in 1855 '56 is part of line 82 and reads "it is no matter who." "It is sacred" added in 1860.
[2] "yourself" added in 1860.
[3] "only" added in 1860.
[4] 1855 reads "A slave at auction."
[5] 1855. For "wonder" reads "curious creature ;" in lines 97, 98, 99, for "it" reads "him."
[6] 1855. For "this" reads "that."
[7] 1855 '56 '60 read "the making of the attributes of heroes."

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white—they are so[1] cunning
in tendon and nerve;
They shall be stript, that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant back-bone and neck, flesh not
flabby, good-sized arms and legs,
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,[2]
The same old blood!
The same red-running blood!
There swells and jets a heart[3]—there all passions, desires, reach-
ings, aspirations;
Do you think they are not there because they are not express'd
in parlors and lecture-rooms?

This is not only one man—this is the father of those who shall
be fathers in their turns;
In him the start of populous states and rich republics;
Of him countless immortal lives, with countless embodiments
and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his off-
spring through the centuries?
Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could
trace back through the centuries?

8

A woman's Body at auction!
She too is not only herself—she is the teeming mother of
mothers;
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the
mothers.[4]

Have you ever loved the Body of a woman?[5]

[1] 1855. For "so" reads "very."
[2] 1855 reads "runs his blood."
[3] 1855 reads "his heart."
[4] 1855 '56 '60. After line 119 read "Her daughters or their daughters' daughters—who knows who shall mate with them?
Who knows through the centuries what heroes may come from them?
In them and of them natal love—in them the divine mystery—the same old beautiful mystery."
[5] 1855 reads "Have you ever loved a woman?"

Have you ever loved the Body of a man?[1]
Your father—where is your father?
Your mother—is she living? have you been much with her? and has she been much with you?
—Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all, in all nations and times, all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred,[2] the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man, is the token of manhood untainted;
And in man or woman, a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is beautiful as the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the fool that corrupted her own live body?
For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.[3]

9[4]

O my Body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men and women, nor the likes of the parts of you;
I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the Soul, (and that they are the Soul;)[5]
I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems—and that they are poems,
Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's, father's, young man's, young woman's poems;
Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,
Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eye-brows, and the waking or sleeping of the lids,
Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the jaw-hinges,
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck, neck-slue,
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and the ample side-round of the chest.

[1] Lines 121–122 added in 1856.
[2] 1855 reads "If life and the soul are sacred."
[3] After line 129. 1855 reads "Who degrades or defiles the living human body is cursed,
Who degrades or defiles the body of the dead is not more cursed."
Which ends the poem of that edition.
[4] Line 130 to end added in 1856.
[5] "(and they are the Soul)" added in 1860.

Upper-arm, arm-pit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews, arm-bones,
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, fore-finger, finger-balls, finger-joints, finger-nails,
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone, breast-side,
Ribs, belly, back-bone, joints of the back-bone,
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round, man-balls, man-root,
Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,
Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under leg,
Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;
All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or your body, or of any one's body, male or female,
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean,
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity,
Womanhood, and all that is a woman—and the man that comes from woman,
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter, weeping, love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,
The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking, swimming,
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving and tightening,
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around the eyes,
The skin, the sun-burnt shade, freckles, hair,
The curious sympathy one feels, when feeling with the hand the naked meat of[1] the body,
The circling rivers, the breath, and breathing it in and out,
The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence downward toward the knees,
The thin red jellies within you, or within me—the bones, and the marrow in the bones,
The exquisite realization of health;
O I say, these are not the parts and poems of the Body only, but of the Soul,
O I say now these are the Soul![2]

[1] 1856 '60 read "meat of his own body or another person's body."
[2] 1856 reads "O I think these are the soul!
If these are not the soul what is the soul?"

A WOMAN WAITS FOR ME.

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of Procreation."

A WOMAN waits for me—she contains all, nothing is lacking,
Yet all were lacking, if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all,
Bodies, Souls, meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk;
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals,
All the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,
These are contain'd in sex, as parts of itself, and justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.[1]

Now[2] I will dismiss myself from impassive women,
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me;
I see that they understand me, and do not deny me;
I see that they are worthy of me—I will be the robust husband of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possess'd of themselves.

[1] 1856 '60. After line 11 read "O I will fetch bully breeds of children yet!"
1856 adds "They cannot be fetched, I say, on less terms than mine,
Electric growth from the male, and rich ripe fibre from the female, are the terms."

[2] "Now" added in 1867.

I draw you close to me, you women!
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but for others' sakes;
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women—I make my way,
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable—but I love you,
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for These States—I press with slow rude muscle,
I brace myself effectually—I listen to no entreaties,
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and America,
The drops I distil upon you shall grow[1] fierce and athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and singers,
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-spendings,
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you interpenetrate now,
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death, immortality, I plant so lovingly now.

SPONTANEOUS ME.

First published in 1856 under the title of "Bunch Poem."

SPONTANEOUS me, Nature,[2]
The loving day,[3] the mounting sun,[4] the friend I am happy with,[5]

[1] 1855. For "shall grow" reads "are drops of."
[2] Line 1 added in 1860.
[3] "The loving day" added in 1860.
[4] "the mounting sun" added in 1867.
[5] "The friend I am happy with," begins poem in 1856.

The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,
The hill-side whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,
The same, late in autumn—the[1] hues of red, yellow, drab, purple, and light and dark green,
The rich coverlid of the grass—animals and birds—the private untrimm'd bank—the primitive apples—the pebble-stones,
Beautiful dripping fragments—the negligent list of one after another, as I happen to call them to me, or think of them,
The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,
This poem, drooping shy and unseen, that I always carry, and that all men carry,
(Know, once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me, are our lusty, lurking, masculine poems;)
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-climbers, and the climbing sap,
Arms and hands of love—lips of love—phallic thumb of love—breasts of love—bellies press'd and glued together with love,
Earth of chaste love—life that is only life after love,
The body of my love—the body of the woman I love—the body of the man—the body of the earth,
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down—that gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and tight till he is satisfied,
The wet of woods through the early hours,
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep, one with an arm slanting down across and below the waist of the other,
The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint, birch-bark,
The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to me what he was dreaming,
The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl, and falling still and content to the ground,
The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me with,
The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever can any one,

[1] 1856–60 read "the gorgeous hues," etc.

The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only privileged feelers may be intimate where they are,
The curious roamer, the hand, roaming all over the body—the bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly pause and edge themselves,
The limpid liquid within the young man,
The vexed corrosion, so pensive and so painful,
The torment—the irritable tide that will not be at rest,
The like of the same I feel—the like of the same in others,
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young woman that flushes and flushes,
The young man that wakes, deep at night, the hot hand seeking to repress what would master him;
The mystic amorous night[1]—the strange half-welcome pangs, visions, sweats,
The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encircling fingers—the young man all color'd, red, ashamed, angry;
The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and naked,
The merriment of the twin-babes that crawl over the grass in the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from them,
The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or ripen'd long-round walnuts;
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself indecent, while birds and animals never once skulk or find themselves indecent;
The great chastity of paternity, to match the great chastity of maternity,
The oath of procreation I have sworn—my Adamic and fresh daughters,[2]
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till I saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place when I am through,
The wholesome relief, repose, content;
And this bunch, pluck'd at random from myself;
It has done its work—I tossed it carelessly to fall where it may.

[1] "The mystic amorous night" added in 1867.
[2] "My Adamic and fresh daughters" added in 1860.

ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY.

First published in 1860.

ONE hour to madness and joy![1]
O furious! O confine me not!
(What is this that frees me so in storms?
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!
O savage and tender achings!
(I bequeath them to you, my children,
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you, whoever you are, and you to be yielded to me, in defiance of the world![2]
O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine![3]
O to draw you to me—to plant on you for the first time the lips of a determin'd man![4]

O the puzzle—the thrice-tied knot—the deep and dark pool! O all untied and illumin'd!
O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at last!
O to be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions[5]—I from mine, and you from yours!
O to find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of nature!
O to have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!
O to have the feeling, to-day or any day, I am sufficient as I am!

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!
O madness amorous! O trembling!
O to escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!
To court destruction with taunts—with invitations!
To ascend—to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!

[1] Line 1 added in 1867.

[2] 1860. After line 9 reads "(Know I am a man, attracting at any time, her I but look upon, or touch with the tips of my fingers, Or that touches my face, or leans against me.)"

[3] "O bashful and feminine!" added in 1867.

[4] 1860. After line 11 reads "O rich and feminine! O to show you how to realize the blood of life for yourself, whoever you are—and no matter when and where you live."

[5] 1860 reads "from previous follies and degradations."

To rise thither with my inebriate Soul!
To be lost, if it must be so!
To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

WE TWO—HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D.

First published in 1860.

[1]We two—how long we were fool'd!
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape, as Nature escapes;[2]
We are Nature—long have we been absent, but now we return;
We become plants, leaves, foliage, roots, bark;
We are bedded in the ground—we are rocks;
We are oaks—we grow in the openings side by side;
We browse—we are two among the wild herds, spontaneous as any;
We are two fishes swimming in the sea together;
We are what the locust blossoms are—we drop scent around the lanes, mornings and evenings;
We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals;[3]
We are two predatory hawks—we soar above, and look down;
We are two resplendent suns—we it is who balance ourselves, orbic and stellar—we are as two comets;
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods—we spring on prey;
We are two clouds, forenoons and afternoons, driving overhead;
We are seas mingling—we are two of those cheerful waves, rolling over each other, and interwetting each other;
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious, impervious:
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness—we are each product and influence of the globe;

[1] 1860 begins "You and I—what the earth is, we are, We two," etc.
[2] 1860 reads "Now delicious, transmuted, swiftly we escape, as Nature escapes."
[3] 1860. After line 10 reads "We are what the flowing wet of the Tennessee is—we are two peaks of the Blue Mountains, rising up in Virginia."

We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again—
we two have;
We have voided all but freedom, and all but our own joy.

OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN, THE CROWD.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

1

Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came a drop gently to me,
Whispering, *I love you, before long I die,*
I have travel'd a long way, merely to look on you, to touch you,
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

2

(Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe;
Return in peace to the ocean, my love;
I too am part of that ocean, my love—we are not so much separated;
Behold the great rondure—the cohesion of all, how perfect!
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,
As for an hour, carrying us diverse—yet cannot carry us diverse for ever;
Be not impatient—a little space—Know you, I salute the air, the ocean and the land,
Every day, at sundown, for your dear sake, my love.)

NATIVE MOMENTS.

First published in 1860.

Native moments! when you come upon me—Ah you are here now!
Give me now libidinous joys only!
Give me the drench of my passions! Give me life coarse and rank!
To-day, I go consort with nature's darlings—to-night too;
I am for those who believe in loose delights—I share the midnight orgies of young men;
I dance with the dancers. and drink with the drinkers;

The echoes ring with our indecent calls;
I take for my love some prostitute—I pick out some low person for my dearest friend,
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate—he shall be one condemn'd by others for deeds done;
I will play a part no longer—Why should I exile myself from my companions?
O you shunn'd persons! I at least do not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst—I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

ONCE I PASS'D THROUGH A POPULOUS CITY.

First published in 1860.

Once I pass'd through a populous city, imprinting my brain, for future use, with its shows, architecture, customs, and traditions;
Yet now, of all that city, I remember only a woman I casually met there, who detain'd me for love of me;
Day by day and night by night we were together,—All else has long been forgotten by me;
I remember, I say, only that woman who passionately clung to me;
Again we wander—we love—we separate again;
Again she holds me by the hand—I must not go!
I see her close beside me, with silent lips, sad and tremulous.

FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES.

First published in 1860.

Facing west, from California's shores,[1]
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,[2]
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western Sea[3]—the circle almost circled;
For, starting[4] westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,

[1] Line 1. Added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "seeking that yet unfound."
[3] 1860 reads "having arrived at last where I am—the circle," etc.
[4] 1860 reads "For, coming."

From Asia—from the north—from the God, the sage, and the hero,
From the south—from the flowery peninsulas, and the spice islands;
Long having wander'd since—round the earth having wander'd,[1]
Now I face home again—very pleas'd and joyous;[2]
(But where is what I started for, so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

AGES AND AGES, RETURNING AT INTERVALS.

First published in 1860.

Ages and ages, returning at intervals,
Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,
Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly sweet,
I, chanter of Adamic songs,
Through the new garden, the West, the great cities calling,
Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these, offering myself,
Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,
Offspring of my loins.

O HYMEN! O HYMENEE!

First published in 1860.

O hymen! O hymenee!
Why do you tantalize me thus?
O why sting me for a swift moment only?
Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?
Is it because, if you continued beyond the swift moment, you would soon certainly kill me?

AS ADAM, EARLY IN THE MORNING.

First published in 1860.

As Adam,[3] early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower, refresh'd with sleep;
Behold me where I pass—hear my voice—approach,
Touch me—touch the palm of your hand to my Body as I pass;
Be not afraid of my Body.

[1] Line 8. Added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "Now I face the old home again—looking over to it joyous, as after long travel, growth, and sleep."
[3] "As Adam" added in 1867.

I HEARD YOU, SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES OF THE ORGAN.

First published in "When Lilacs," etc., 1855–56.

I HEARD you, solemn-sweet pipes of the organ, as last Sunday morn I pass'd the church;
Winds of autumn!—as I walk'd the woods at dusk, I heard your long-stretch'd sighs, up above, so mournful;
I heard the perfect Italian tenor, singing at the opera—I heard the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;
. . . Heart of my love!—you too I heard, murmuring low, through one of the wrists around my head;
Heard the pulse of you, when all was still, ringing little bells last night under my ear.

I AM HE THAT ACHES WITH LOVE.

First published in 1860.

I AM he that aches with amorous[1] love;
Does the earth gravitate? Does not all matter, aching, attract all matter?
So the Body of me, to all I meet, or know.[2]

TO HIM THAT WAS CRUCIFIED.

First published in 1860.

MY spirit to yours, dear brother;
Do not mind because many, sounding your name, do not understand you;
I do not sound your name, but I understand you, (there are others also;)
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you, and to salute those who are with you, before and since—and those to come also,
That we all labor together, transmitting the same charge and succession;
We few, equals, indifferent of lands, indifferent of times;
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes—allowers of all theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,

[1] "amorous" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "or that I know."

Walt Whitman
in 1850 or '49

We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not the disputers, nor any thing that is asserted;
We hear the bawling and din—we are reach'd at by divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side,
They close peremptorily upon us, to surround us, my comrade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up and down, till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers, as we are.

PERFECTIONS.

First published in 1860.

Only themselves understand themselves, and the like of themselves,
As Souls only understand Souls.

CALAMUS.

IN PATHS UNTRODDEN.

First published in 1860.

In paths untrodden,
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
From all the standards hitherto publish'd—from the pleasures, profits, eruditions,[1] conformities,
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul;
Clear to me, now, standards not yet publish'd—clear to me that my Soul,
That the Soul of the man I speak for, feeds, rejoices most in comrades;[2]
Here, by myself, away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,

[1] "eruditions" added in 1870.
[2] 1860 reads "only in comrades." 1867 reads "in comrades."

No longer abash'd—for in this secluded spot I can respond as I would not dare elsewhere,
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains all the rest,
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
Projecting them along that substantial life,
Bequeathing, hence, types of athletic love,
Afternoon, this delicious Ninth-month, in my forty-first year,
I proceed, for all who are, or have been, young men,
To tell the secret of my nights and days,
To celebrate the need of comrades.

SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST.

First published in 1860.

Scented herbage of my breast,
Leaves from you I yield, I write, to be perused best afterwards,
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves, growing up above me, above death,
Perennial roots, tall leaves—O the winter shall not freeze you, delicate leaves,
Every year shall you bloom again—out from where you retired, you shall emerge again;
O I do not know whether many, passing by, will discover you, or inhale your faint odor—but I believe a few will;
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to tell, in your own way, of the heart that is under you;
O burning and throbbing—surely all will one day be accomplish'd;
O I do not know what you mean, there underneath yourselves—you are not happiness,
You are often more bitter than I can bear—you burn and sting me,
Yet you are very beautiful to me, you faint-tinged roots—you make me think of Death,
Death is beautiful from you—(what indeed is finally[1] beautiful, except Death and Love?)
—O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers—I think it must be for Death,

[1] "finally" added in 1870.

For how calm, how solemn it grows, to ascend to the atmosphere of lovers,
Death or life I am then indifferent—my Soul declines to prefer,
I am not sure but the high Soul of lovers welcomes death most;
Indeed, O Death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as you mean;
Grow up taller, sweet leaves, that I may see! grow up out of my breast!
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!
Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots, timid leaves!
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!
Come, I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine—I have long enough stifled and choked:
—Emblematic and capricious blade, I leave you—now you serve me not;
Away! I will say what I have to say, by itself,
I will escape from the sham that was proposed to me,
I will sound myself and comrades only—I will never again utter a call, only their call,
I will raise, with it, immortal reverberations through The States,
I will give an example to lovers, to take permanent shape and will through The States;
Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarating;
Give me your tone therefore, O Death, that I may accord with it,
Give me yourself—for I see that you belong to me now above all, and are folded inseparably[1] together—you Love and Death are;
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was calling life,
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons—and that they are mainly for you,
That you, beyond them, come forth, to remain, the real reality,
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter how long,
That you will one day, perhaps, take control of all,
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,

[1] "inseparably" added in 1867.

That may-be you are what it is all for—but it does not last so very long;
But you will last very long.

WHOEVER YOU ARE, HOLDING ME NOW IN HAND.

First published in 1860.

Whoever you are, holding me now in hand,
Without one thing, all will be useless,
I give you fair warning, before you attempt me further,
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?[1]

The way is suspicious—the result[2] uncertain, perhaps destructive;
You would have to give up all else—I alone would expect to be your God, sole and exclusive,
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life, and all conformity to the lives around you, would have to be abandon'd;
Therefore release me now, before troubling yourself any further—Let go your hand from my shoulders,
Put me down, and depart on your way.

Or else,[3] by stealth, in some wood, for trial,
Or back of a rock, in the open air,
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not—nor in company,
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)
But just possibly with you on a high hill—first watching lest any person, for miles around, approach unawares,
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea, or some quiet island,
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss, or the new husband's kiss,
For I am the new husband, and I am the comrade.

Or, if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,

[1] 1860 reads "Are you he?"
[2] 1860 reads "the result slow, uncertain."
[3] 1860 reads "Or else only by stealth."

Where I may feel the throbs of your heart, or rest upon your hip,
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;
For thus, merely touching you, is enough—is best,
And thus, touching you, would I silently sleep and be carried eternally.

But these leaves conning, you con at peril,
For these leaves, and me, you will not understand,
They will elude you at first, and still more afterward—I will certainly elude you,
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, behold!
Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this book,
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,
Nor do those know me best who admire me, and vauntingly praise me,
Nor will the candidates for my love, (unless at most a very few,) prove victorious,
Nor will my poems do good only—they will do just as much evil, perhaps more;
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not hit—that which I hinted at;
Therefore release me, and depart on your way.

THESE I, SINGING IN SPRING.

First published in 1860.

These, I, singing in spring, collect for lovers,
(For who but I should understand lovers, and all their sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)
Collecting, I traverse the garden, the world—but soon I pass the gates,
Now along the pond-side—now wading in a little, fearing not the wet,
Now by the post-and-rail fences, where the old stones thrown there, pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,

(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the stones,
and partly cover them—Beyond these I pass,)
Far, far in the forest, before I think where I go,
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in the
silence,
Alone I had thought—yet soon a[1] troop gathers around me,
Some walk by my side, and some behind, and some embrace my
arms or neck,
They, the spirits of dear[2] friends, dead or alive—thicker they
come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,
Collecting, dispensing, singing in spring, there I wander with
them,
Plucking something for tokens[3]—tossing toward whoever is near
me;
Here! lilac, with a branch of pine,
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-oak
in Florida, as it hung trailing down,
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-
side,
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me—and returns
again, never to separate from me,
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades—
this Calamus-root shall,
Interchange it, youths, with each other! Let none render it
back!)
And twigs of maple, and a bunch of wild orange, and chest-
nut,
And stems of currants, and plum-blows, and the aromatic
cedar:
These, I, compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,
Wandering, point to, or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely
from me,
Indicating to each one what he shall have—giving something to
each;
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I re-
serve,
I will give of it—but only to them that love, as I myself am
capable of loving.

[1] 1860 '67 read "yet soon a silent troop."
[2] "dear" added in 1870.
[3] 1860 reads "something for these till I hit upon a name—tossing," etc.

A SONG.

First published in 1860. See note.

1

COME,[1] I will make the continent indissoluble;
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever yet shone upon;
I will make divine magnetic lands,
[2]With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

2

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies;
I will make inseparable cities, with their arms about each other's necks;
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

3

For you these, from me, O Democracy, to serve you, ma femme!
For you! for you, I am trilling these songs,
In the love of comrades,
In the high-towering love of comrades.

NOT HEAVING FROM MY RIBB'D BREAST ONLY.

First published in 1860.

NOT heaving from my ribb'd breast only;
Not in sighs at night, in rage, dissatisfied with myself;
Not in those long-drawn, ill-suppressed sighs;
Not in many an oath and promise broken;
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition;
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air;

[1] "Come" added in 1867.

[2] Lines 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, added in 1867. With these exceptions this poem is composed of verses 13, 14 and 15 of the 5th poem in "Calamus" Edition of 1860, beginning
"States!
Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?" See page 469.

Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists;
Not in the curious systole and diastole within, which will one day cease;
Not in many a hungry wish, told to the skies only;
Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone, far in the wilds;
Not in husky pantings through clench'd teeth;
Not in sounded and resounded words—chattering words, echoes, dead words;
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,
Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day;
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body, that take you and dismiss you continually—Not there;
Not in any or all of them, O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!
Need I that you exist and show yourself, any more than in these songs.

OF THE TERRIBLE DOUBT OF APPEARANCES.

First published in 1860.

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all—that we may be deluded,[1]
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
May-be the things I perceive—the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night—colors, densities, forms—May-be these are, (as doubtless they are,) only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known;
(How often they dart out of themselves, as if to confound me and mock me!
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught of them;)
May-be seeming to me what they are,[2] (as doubtless they indeed but seem,) as from my present point of view—And might prove, (as of course they would,) naught of what they appear, or naught any how, from entirely changed points of view;

[1] "that we may be deluded" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "May-be they only seem to me what they are."

—To me, these, and the like of these, are curiously answer'd by
my lovers, my dear friends;
When he whom I love travels with me, or sits a long while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom—I am silent—I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances, or that of identity beyond the grave;
But I walk or sit indifferent—I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS.

First published in 1870.

And now, gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base, and finale too, for all metaphysics.

(So, to the students, the old professor,
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated—Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato—and Socrates, greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated—Christ divine having studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all—Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see—and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade—the attraction of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife—of children and parents,
Of city for city, and land for land.

RECORDERS AGES HENCE.

First published in 1860.

RECORDERS ages hence![1]
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior
—I will tell you what to say of me;
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover,
The friend, the lover's portrait, of whom his friend, his lover, was fondest,
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love within him—and freely pour'd it forth,
Who often walk'd lonesome walks, thinking of his dear friends, his lovers,
Who pensive, away from one he lov'd, often lay sleepless and dissatisfied at night,
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he lov'd might secretly be indifferent to him,
Whose happiest days were far away, through fields, in woods, on hills, he and another, wandering hand in hand, they twain, apart from other men,
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets, curv'd with his arm the shoulder of his friend—while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY.

First published in 1860.

WHEN I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd;
And else, when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not happy;
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning light,

[1] 1860 reads "You bards of ages hence! when you refer to me, mind not so much my poems,
Nor speak of me that I prophesied of the States, and led them the way of their glories;
But come, I will take you," etc.

When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing, bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend, my lover, was on his way coming, O then I was happy;
O then each breath tasted sweeter—and all that day my food nourish'd me more—and the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy—and with the next, at evening, came my friend;
And that night, while all was still, I heard the waters roll slowly continually up the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands, as directed to me, whispering, to congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool night,
In the stillness, in the autumn moonbeams, his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night I was happy.

ARE YOU THE NEW PERSON DRAWN TOWARD ME?

First published in 1860.

Are you the new person drawn toward me?[1]
To begin with, take warning—I am surely[2] far different from what you suppose;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?
Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd satisfaction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this façade—this smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?
Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all maya, illusion?[3]

[1] 1860 adds "and asking something significant from me?"
[2] 1860. For "surely" reads "probably."
[3] 1860 adds "O the next step may precipitate you!"

ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE.

First published in 1860.

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these ;[1]
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods, and from the pond-side,
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love—fingers that wind around tighter than vines,
Gushes from the throats of birds, hid in the foliage of trees, as the sun is risen ;
Breezes of land and love—breezes set from living shores out to you on the living sea—to you, O sailors !
Frost-mellow'd berries, and Third-month twigs, offer'd fresh to young persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks up,
Love-buds, put before you and within you, whoever you are,
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms ;
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them, they will open, and bring form, color, perfume, to you ;
If you become the aliment and the wet, they will become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.[2]

NOT HEAT FLAMES UP AND CONSUMES.

First published in 1860.

Not heat flames up and consumes,
Not sea-waves hurry in an out,
Not the air, delicious and dry, the air of the ripe summer, bears lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,
Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may ;
Not these—O none of these, more than the flames of me, consuming, burning for his love whom I love !
O none, more than I, hurrying in and out :

[1] 1860 reads "Calamus taste,
(For I must change the strain—these are not to be pensive leaves, but leaves of joy,)
Root and leaves unlike any but themselves."

[2] After line 10, 1860 reads "They are comprised in you just as much as in themselves—perhaps more than in themselves,
They are not comprised in one season or succession, but many successions,
They have come slowly up out of the earth and me, and are to come slowly up out of you."

—Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up? O I the same;
O nor down-balls, nor perfumes, nor the high, rain-emitting clouds, are borne through the open air,
Any more than my Soul is borne through the open air,
Wafted in all directions, O love, for friendship, for you.

TRICKLE, DROPS.

First published in 1860.

Trickle, drops! my blue veins leaving![1]
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,
Candid, from me falling—drip, bleeding drops,
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,
From my face—from my forehead and lips,
From my breast—from within where I was conceal'd—press forth, red drops—confession drops;
Stain every page—stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody drops;
Let them know your scarlet heat—let them glisten;
Saturate them with yourself, all ashamed and wet;
Glow upon all I have written, or shall write, bleeding drops;
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

CITY OF ORGIES.

First published in 1860.

City of orgies, walks and joys![2]
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst[3] will one day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you—not your shifting tableaux, your spectacles, repay me;
Not the interminable rows of your houses—nor the ships at the wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows, with goods in them;

[1] Line 1 added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "City of my walks and joys!"
[3] "in your midst" added in 1867.

Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the soiree or feast;
Not those—but, as I pass, O Manhattan! your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own—these repay me;
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

BEHOLD THIS SWARTHY FACE.

First published in 1860.

[1]Behold this swarthy face[2]—these gray eyes,
This beard—the white wool, unclipt upon my neck,
My brown hands, and the silent manner of me, without charm;
Yet comes one, a Manhattanese, and ever at parting, kisses me lightly on the lips with robust love,
And I,[3] on the crossing of the street, or on the ship's deck, give a kiss in return;
We observe that salute of American comrades, land and sea,
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE-OAK GROWING.

First published in 1860.

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it, and the moss hung down from the branches;
Without any companion it grew there, uttering joyous leaves of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself;
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves, standing alone there, without its friend, its lover near—for I knew I could not;
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and twined around it a little moss,
And brought it away—and I have placed it in sight in my room;
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,

[1] 1860 begins "Mind you the timid models of the rest, the majority? Long I minded them but hence I will not—for I have adopted models for myself, and now offer them to The Lands."

[2] 1860 reads "Behold this swarthy and unrefined face—these gray eyes." 1867 reads "Behold this swarthy, this unrefined face—these gray eyes."

[3] 1860 '67 read "And I in the public room, or on the crossing," etc.

(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them;)
Yet it remains to me a curious token—it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana, solitary, in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life, without a friend, a lover, near,
I know very well I could not.

TO A STRANGER.

First published in 1860.

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you,
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me, as of a dream,)
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate, chaste, matured,
You grew up with me, were a boy with me, or a girl with me,
I ate with you, and slept with you—your body has become not yours only, nor left my body mine only,
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass—you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,
I am not to speak to you—I am to think of you when I sit alone, or wake at night alone,
I am to wait—I do not doubt I am to meet you again,
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

THIS MOMENT, YEARNING AND THOUGHTFUL.

First published in 1860.

This moment yearning and thoughtful, sitting alone,[1]
It seems to me there are other men in other lands, yearning and thoughtful;
It seems to me I can look over and behold them, in Germany, Italy, France, Spain—or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or India—talking other dialects;

[1] 1860 reads "This moment as I sit alone, yearning and thoughtful."

And it seems to me if I could know those men,[1] I should become attached to them, as I do to men in my own lands ;[2]
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.

I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME.

First published in 1860.

I HEAR it was[3] charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions ;
But really I am neither for nor against institutions ;
(What indeed have I in common with them ?—Or what with the destruction of them ?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta, and in every city of These States, inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel, little or large, that dents the water,
Without edifices, or rules, or trustees, or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING.

First published in 1860.

THE prairie-grass dividing—its special odor breathing,[4]
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
Demand the most copious and close companionship of men.
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and command—leading, not following,
Those with a never-quell'd audacity—those with sweet and lusty flesh, clear of taint,[5]
Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and Governors, as to say, *Who are you ?*
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never-constrain'd, never obedient,
Those of inland America.

[1] 1860 reads "know those men better."
[2] 1860. After line 4 reads "It seems to me they are as wise, beautiful, benevolent, as any in my own lands," etc.
[3] 1860. For "was" read "is."
[4] 1860 reads "Its own odor breathing."
[5] 1860 adds "choice and chary of its love-power."

WE TWO BOYS TOGETHER CLINGING.

First published in 1860.

We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going—North and South excursions making,
Power enjoying—elbows stretching—fingers clutching,
Arm'd and fearless—eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning—sailing, soldiering, thieving, threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming—air breathing, water drinking, on the turf or the sea-beach dancing,[1]
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.

A PROMISE TO CALIFORNIA.

First published in 1860.

A promise to California,[2]
Also to the great Pastoral Plains, and for Oregon:
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward[3] you, to remain, to teach robust American love;
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you, inland, and along the Western Sea;
For These States tend inland, and toward the Western Sea—and I will also.

HERE THE FRAILEST LEAVES OF ME.

First published in 1860.

[4]Here the frailest leaves of me, and yet my strongest-lasting:
Here I shade and hide my thoughts—I myself do not expose them,
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

[1] 1860. After line 7 adds "With birds singing—With fishes swimming—With trees branching and leafing."
[2] 1860 reads "A promise and gift to California."
[3] 1860 reads "travel to you."
[4] 1860 begins "Here my last words, and the most baffling."
[5] 1860 '67 read "Here I shade down and hide my thoughts—I do not expose them."

WHEN I PERUSE THE CONQUER'D FAME.

First published in 1860.

When I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes, and the victories of mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his great house;
But when I hear[1] of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with them,
How through life, through dangers, odium, unchanging, long and long,
Through youth, and through middle and old age, how unfaltering, how affectionate and faithful they were,
Then I am pensive—I hastily[2] walk away, fill'd with the bitterest envy.

WHAT THINK YOU I TAKE MY PEN IN HAND?

First published in 1860.

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?
The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the offing to-day under full sail?
The splendors of the past day? Or the splendor of the night that envelopes me?
Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread around me?—No;
But I record of two simple men I saw to-day, on the pier, in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends;
The one to remain hung on the other's neck, and passionately kiss'd him,
While the one to depart, tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

A GLIMPSE.

First published in 1860.

A glimpse, through an interstice caught,[3]
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room, around the stove, late of a winter night—And I unremark'd seated in a corner;

[1] 1860 '67 read "When I read," etc.
[2] 1860 '67 read "I hastily put down the book and walk away," etc.
[3] 1860 reads "One flitting glimpse, caught through an interstice."

Of a youth who loves me, and whom I love, silently approaching, and seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand;
A long while, amid the noises of coming and going—of drinking and oath and smutty jest,
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little, perhaps not a word.

NO LABOR-SAVING MACHINE.

First published in 1860.

No labor-saving machine,
Nor discovery have I made;
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest to found a hospital or library,
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage, for America,
Nor literary success, nor intellect—nor book for the book-shelf;
Only a few carols, vibrating through the air, I leave,
For comrades and lovers.

A LEAF FOR HAND IN HAND.

First published in 1860.

A Leaf for hand in hand!
You natural persons old and young![1]
You on the Mississippi, and on all the branches and bayous of the Mississippi!
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! You roughs!
You twain! And all processions moving along the streets!
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to walk hand in hand!

TO THE EAST AND TO THE WEST

First published in 1860.

To the East and to the West;[2]
To the man of the Seaside State, and of Pennsylvania,
To the Kanadian of the North—to the Southerner I love;
These, with perfect trust, to depict you as myself—the germs are in all men;

[1] 1860 adds "You on the eastern sea and you on the western!"
[2] 1860 reads "To you of New England."

I believe the main purport of These States is to found a superb
friendship, exalté, previously unknown,
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting, latent
in all men.

EARTH! MY LIKENESS!

First published in 1860.

EARTH! my likeness!
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,
I now suspect that is not all;
I now suspect there is something fierce in you, eligible to burst
forth;
For an athlete is enamour'd of me—and I of him;
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me,
eligible to burst forth,
I dare not tell it in words—not even in these songs.

I DREAM'D IN A DREAM.

First published in 1860.

I DREAM'D in a dream, I saw a city invincible to the attacks of
the whole of the rest of the earth;
I dream'd that was the new City of Friends;
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love—it led
the rest;
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

FAST ANCHOR'D, ETERNAL, O LOVE!

First published in 1867.

FAST-ANCHOR'D, eternal, O love! O woman I love!
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought
of you!
—Then separate, as disembodied, or another born,
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation;
I ascend—I float in the regions of your love, O man,
O sharer of my roving life.

SOMETIMES WITH ONE I LOVE.

First published in 1860.

SOMETIMES with one I love, I fill myself with rage, for fear I
effuse unreturn'd love;
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love—the pay is certain,
one way or another;[1]
(I loved a certain person ardently, and my love was not re-
turn'd;
Yet out of that, I have written these songs.)

THAT SHADOW, MY LIKENESS.

First published in 1860.

THAT shadow, my likeness, that goes to and fro, seeking a live-
lihood, chattering, chaffering;
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it
flits;
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;
—But in these, and among my lovers, and caroling my songs,
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

AMONG THE MULTITUDE.

First published in 1860.

AMONG the men and women, the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else—not parent, wife, husband, brother,
child, any nearer than I am;
Some are baffled—But that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah, lover and perfect equal!
I meant that you should discover me so, by my faint indirec-
tions;
And I, when I meet you, mean to discover you by the like in
you.

[1] For lines 3 and 4, 1860 reads "Doubtless I could not have perceived the universe, or written one of the poems, if I had not freely given myself to comrades, to love."

TO A WESTERN BOY.

First published in 1860.

O BOY of the West![1]
To you many things to absorb, I teach, to help you become eleve of mine:[2]
Yet[3] if blood like mine circle not in your veins;
If you[4] be not silently selected by lovers, and do not silently select lovers,
Of what use is it that you[5] seek to become eleve of mine?

O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME.

First published in 1860.

O YOU whom I often and silently come where you are, that I may be with you;
As I walk by your side, or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.

FULL OF LIFE, NOW.

First published in 1860.

FULL of life, now,[6] compact, visible,
I, forty years old the Eighty-third Year of The States,
To one a century hence, or any number of centuries hence,
To you, yet unborn, these, seeking you.

When you read these, I, that was visible, am become invisible;
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me;
Fancying how happy you were, if I could be with you, and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)

[1] Line 1. Added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "To the young many many things to absorb, to engraft, to develop, I teach, to help him become élève of mine."
[3] 1860. For "Yet" reads "But."
[4] 1860. For "you" reads "he."
[5] 1860. For "you" reads "he."
[6] 1860. For "now" reads "sweet-blooded."

SALUT AU MONDE!

First published in 1856.

1

O TAKE my hand, Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next!
Each answering all—each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you, Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? what persons and lands are here?
Who are the infants? some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? who are the married women?
Who are the groups of[1] old men going slowly with their arms about each other's necks?
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellings are they, fill'd with dwellers?

2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens;
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided for in the west;
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends;
Within me is the longest day—the sun wheels in slanting rings—it does not set for months;
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just rises above the horizon, and sinks again;
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, plants,[2] volcanoes, groups,
Malaysia,[3] Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

[1] 1856 '60 '67 read "Who are the three old men," etc.
[2] 1856 '60 for "plants" read "plains."
[3] 1856 '60 for "Malaysia" read "Oceanica, Australasia."

3

What do you hear, Walt Whitman?

I hear the workman singing, and the farmer's wife singing;
I hear in the distance the sounds of children, and of animals early in the day;[1]
I hear quick rifle-cracks from the riflemen of East Tennessee and Kentucky, hunting on hills;
I hear emulous shouts of Australians, pursuing the wild horse;
I hear the Spanish dance, with castanets, in the chestnut shade, to the rebeck and guitar;
I hear continual echoes from the Thames;
I hear fierce French liberty songs;
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old poems;
I hear the Virginia plantation-chorus of negroes, of a harvest night, in the glare of pine-knots;
I hear the strong baritone of the 'long-shore-men of Mannahatta;
I hear the stevedores unlading the cargoes, and singing;
I hear the screams of the water-fowl of solitary north-west lakes;
I hear the rustling pattering of locusts, as they strike the grain and grass with the showers of their terrible clouds;
I hear the Coptic refrain, toward sundown, pensively falling on the breast of the black venerable vast mother, the Nile;
I hear the bugles of raft-tenders on the streams of Kanada;
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of the mule;
I hear the Arab muezzin, calling from the top of the mosque;
I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their churches—I hear the responsive bass and soprano;
I hear the wail of utter despair of the white-hair'd Irish grandparents, when they learn the death of their grandson;
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice, putting to sea at Okotsk;
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle, as the slaves march on—as the husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fasten'd together with wrist-chains and ankle-chains;

[1] 1856 after line 24 reads "I hear the inimitable music of the voices of mothers,
I hear the persuasions of lovers."

I hear the entreaties of women tied up for punishment—I hear the sibilant whisk of thongs through the air ;[1]
I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms ;
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of the Romans ;
I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the beautiful God—the Christ ;
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves, wars, adages, transmitted safely to this day, from poets who wrote three thousand years ago.

4

What do you see, Walt Whitman ?
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you ?

I see a great round wonder rolling through the air ;
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, grave-yards, jails, factories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads, upon the surface ;
I see the shaded part on one side, where the sleepers are sleeping —and the sun-lit part on the other side,
I see the curious silent change of the light and shade,
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them, as my land is to me.

I see plenteous waters ;
I see mountain peaks—I see the sierras of Andes and Alleghanies, where they range ;
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts ;
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,[2]
I see the Rocky Mountains, and the Peak of Winds ;
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps ;
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians—and to the north the Dofrafields, and off at sea Mount Hecla ;
I see Vesuvius and Etna—I see the Anahuacs ;
I see the Mountains of the Moon, and the Snow Mountains, and the Red Mountains of Madagascar ;
I see the Vermont hills, and the long string of Cordilleras ;

[1] After line 44, 1856 reads "I hear the appeal of the greatest orator, he that turns states by the tip of his tongue."
[2] Line 59 added in 1870.

I see the vast deserts of Western America;
I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts;
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs;
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones—the Atlantic and Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the sea of Peru,
The Japan waters, those of Hindostan, the China Sea, and the Gulf of Guinea,
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, and the Bay of Biscay,
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another of its islands,
The inland fresh-tasted seas of North America,
The White Sea, and the sea around Greenland.

I behold the mariners of the world;
Some are in storms—some in the night, with the watch on the look-out;
Some drifting helplessly—some with contagious diseases.

I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clusters in port, some on their voyages;[1]
Some double the Cape of Storms—some Cape Verde,—others Cape Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore;
Others Dondra Head—others pass the Straits of Sunda—others Cape Lopatka—others Behring's Straits;
Others Cape Horn—others sail[2] the Gulf of Mexico, or along Cuba or Hayti—others Hudson's Bay or Baffin's Bay;
Others pass the Straits of Dover—others enter the Wash—others the Firth of Solway—others round Cape Clear—others the Land's End;
Others traverse the Zuyder Zee, or the Scheld;
Others add to the exits and entrances at Sandy Hook;
Others to the comers and goers at Gibraltar, or the Dardanelles;
Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-packs;
Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena;
Others the Niger or the Congo[3]—others the Indus, the Burampooter and Cambodia;

[1] 1856 '60. For line 78 read "I behold the steam-ships of the world."
[2] "sail" added in 1867.
[3] 1856 reads "Others the Hoangho and Amoor, others the Indus," etc.

Others wait at the wharves of Manhattan, steam'd up, ready to start;
Wait, swift and swarthy, in the ports of Australia;
Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon, Naples, Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague, Copenhagen;
Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama;
Wait at their moorings at Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Galveston, San Francisco.

5

I see the tracks of the rail-roads of the earth;
I see them welding State to State,[1] city to city, through North America;
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe;
I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth;
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses, gains, passions, of my race.

I see the long[2] river-stripes of the earth;
I see where the Mississippi flows—I see where the Columbia flows;
I see the Great River[3] and the Falls of Niagara;
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay;
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow River, the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl;[4]
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube,[5] the Loire, the Rhone, and the Guadalquiver flow;
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder;
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian along the Po;
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.

6

I see the site of the[6] old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India;
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.

[1] 1856 reads "State to State, county to county," etc.
[2] 1856. For "long" reads "thick."
[3] 1856. For "Great River" reads "St. Lawrence."
[4] Line 104 added in 1860.
[5] "the Danube" added in 1870.
[6] 1856 reads "the great old Empire."

I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human forms;
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth—oracles, sacrificers, brahmins, sabians, lamas, monks, muftis, exhorters;
I see where druids walked the groves of Mona—I see the mistletoe and vervain;
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods—I see the old signifiers.

I see Christ once more eating the bread of his last supper, in the midst of youths and old persons;
I see where the strong divine young man, the Hercules, toil'd faithfully and long, and then died;
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus;
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of feathers on his head;
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-beloved, saying to the people, *Do not weep for me,*
This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my true country—I now go back there,
I return to the celestial sphere, where every one goes in his turn.

7

I see the battle-fields of the earth—grass grows upon them, and blossoms and corn;
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.

I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the unknown events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas;
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts;
I see granite boulders and cliffs—I see green meadows and lakes;
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors;
I see them raised high with stones, by the marge of restless oceans, that the dead men's spirits, when they wearied of their quiet graves, might rise up through the mounds, and gaze on the tossing billows, and be refresh'd by storms, immensity, liberty, action.

I see the steppes of Asia;
I see the tumuli of Mongolia—I see the tents of Kalmucks and Baskirs;
I see the nomadic tribes, with herds of oxen and cows;
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines—I see the jungles and deserts;
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tail'd sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing wolf.

I see the high-lands of Abyssinia;
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree, tamarind, date,
And see fields of teff-wheat, and see the places of verdure and gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero;
I see the Bolivian ascending Mount Sorata;
I see the Wacho[1] crossing the plains—I see the incomparable rider of horses with his lasso on his arm;
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.

8

I see little and large sea-dots, some inhabited, some uninhabited;
I see two boats with nets, lying off the shore of Paumanok, quite still;
I see ten fishermen waiting—they discover now a thick school of mossbonkers—they drop the join'd seine-ends in the water,
The boats separate—they diverge and row off, each on its rounding course to the beach, enclosing the mossbonkers;
The net is drawn in by a windlass by those who stop ashore,
Some of the fishermen lounge in their boats—others stand negligently ankle-deep in the water, pois'd on strong legs;
The boats are partly drawn up—the water slaps against them;
On the sand, in heaps and winrows, well out from the water, lie the green-back'd spotted mossbonkers.

[1] 1856. For "Wacho" reads "Guacho."

9

I see the despondent red man in the west, lingering about the banks of Moingo, and about Lake Pepin ;
He has heard the quail and beheld the honey-bee, and sadly prepared to depart.

I see the regions of snow and ice ;
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn ;
I see the seal-seeker in his boat, poising his lance ;
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge, drawn by dogs ;
I see the porpoise-hunters—I see the whale-crews of the South Pacific and the North Atlantic ;
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland—I mark the long winters, and the isolation.

I see the cities of the earth, and make myself at random a part of them ;
I am a real Parisian ;[1]
I am a habitan of Vienna,[2] St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople ;
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne ;
I am of London,[3] Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick ;
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence ;
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw—or northward in Christiania or Stockholm—or in Siberian Irkutsk[4]—or in some street in Iceland ;
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

10

I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries ;
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd splint, the fetish, and the obi.

I see African and Asiatic towns ;
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia ;
I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta, Yedo ;[5]

[1] 1856 reads "I am a real Londoner, Parisian, Viennese."
[2] "Vienna" added in 1860.
[3] "London" added in 1860.
[4] "or in Siberian Irkutsk" added in 1860.
[5] "Yedo" added in 1860.

I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashantee-
man in their huts;
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo;
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva, and those of
Herat;
I see Teheran—I see Muscat and Medina, and the intervening
sands—I see the caravans toiling onward;
I see Egypt and the Egyptians—I see the pyramids and obelisks;
I look on chisel'd histories, songs, philosophies, cut in slabs of
sand-stone, or on granite-blocks;
I see at Memphis mummy-pits, containing mummies, embalm'd,
swathed in linen cloth, lying there many centuries;
I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the side-
drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see the menials of the earth, laboring;
I see the prisoners in the prisons;
I see the defective human bodies of the earth;
I see the blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics;
I see the pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of
the earth;
I see the helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere;
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophs;
I see the constructiveness of my race;
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my race;
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations—I go among them
—I mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

11

You, whoever you are![1]
You daughter or son of England![2]
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in
Russia!
You dim-descended, black, divine soul'd African, large, fine-
headed, nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal terms
with me!

[1] 1856 reads "You, inevitable where you are!" 1860 '67 read "You, where you are!"

[2] After line 192, 1856 reads "You freer man of Australia! you of Tasmania! you of Papua!
You free woman of the same!"

You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelander! you Prussian!
You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!
You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands!
You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! farmer of Styria!
You neighbor of the Danube!
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you working-woman too!
You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian! Bulgarian!
You citizen of Prague! Roman! Neapolitan! Greek!
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!
You Bokh horse-herd, watching your mares and stallions feeding!
You beautiful-bodied Persian, at full speed in the saddle, shooting arrows to the mark!
You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of Tartary!
You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk, to stand once on Syrian ground!
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!
You thoughtful Armenian, pondering by some stream of the Euphrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you ascending Mount Ararat!
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of the minarets of Mecca!
You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb, ruling your families and tribes!
You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth, Damascus, or Lake Tiberias!
You Thibet trader on the wide inland, or bargaining in the shops of Lassa!
You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo!
All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent of place!
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!
And you of centuries hence, when you listen to me!
And you, each and[1] everywhere, whom I specify not, but include just the same!

[1] "each and" added in 1860.

Health to you! Good will to you all—from me and America sent.[1]

Each of us inevitable;
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the earth;
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports[2] of the earth;
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

12

You Hottentot with clicking palate! You woolly-hair'd hordes![3]
You own'd persons, dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops![4]
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!
I dare not refuse you—the scope of the world, and of time and space, are upon me.[5]

You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon, for all your glimmering language and spirituality!
You low expiring aborigines of the hills of Utah, Oregon, California!
You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!
You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip, grovelling, seeking your food!
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd, Bedowee!
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!
You bather bathing in the Ganges!
You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Fejee-man!
You peon of Mexico![6] you slave[7] of Carolina, Texas, Tennessee!
I do not prefer others so very much before you either;

[1] 1856 reads "I salute you for myself and for Amercia." 1860, after line 222, adds "For we acknowledge you all and each."
[2] 1856 '60. For "purports" read "purport."
[3] 1856 '60 add "you white or black owners of slaves."
[4] After line 228, 1856 reads "You felons, deformed persons, idiots!"
[5] Line 230 added in 1867.
[6] 1856 '60 add "you Russian serf!"
[7] 1856. For "slave" reads "quadroon."

I do not say one word against you, away back there, where you stand;
(You will come forward in due time to my side.)[1]

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth;
I have look'd for equals and lovers,[2] and found them ready for me in all lands;
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.[3]

13

O vapors! I think I have risen with you,[4] and moved away to distant continents, and fallen down there, for reasons;
I think I have blown with you, O winds;[5]
O waters,[6] I have finger'd every shore with you.

I have[7] run though what any river or strait of the globe has run through;
I have[8] taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas, and on the high[9] embedded rocks, to cry thence.

Salut au monde![10]
What cities the light or warmth penetrates, I penetrate those cities myself;
All islands to which birds wing their way, I wing my way myself.[11]

Toward all,[12]
I raise high the perpendicular hand—I make the signal,
To remain after me in sight forever,
For all the haunts and homes of men.

[1] 1856. For lines 241, 2, 3 read "I do not refuse you my hand, or prefer others before you,
I do not say one word against you."
[2] 1856 reads "I have looked for brothers, sisters, lovers, and found," etc.
[3] Line 246 added in 1860.
[4] 1856 reads "I think I have risen with you, you vapors," etc.
[5] 1856. For "O winds" reads "you winds."
[6] 1856 reads "I think you waters I have fingered," etc.
[7] 1856 reads "I think I have run," etc.
[8] 1856 reads "I think I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas, and on embedded rocks."
[9] 1860 reads "on the highest embedded rocks, to cry hence."
[10] Line 252 added in 1860.
[11] After line 254, 1856 reads "I find my home wherever there are homes of men."
[12] Lines 255 to end added in 1860.

A CHILD'S AMAZE.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

SILENT and amazed, even when a little boy,
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his statements,
As contending against some being or influence.

THE RUNNER.

First published in 1867.

ON a flat road runs the well-train'd runner;
He is lean and sinewy, with muscular legs;
He is thinly clothed—he leans forward as he runs,
With lightly closed fists, and arms partially rais'd.

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

First published in 1860.

WOMEN sit, or move to and fro—some old, some young;
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than the young.

MOTHER AND BABE.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

I SEE the sleeping babe, nestling the breast of its mother;
The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them long and long.

THOUGHT.

First published in 1860.

OF obedience, faith, adhesiveness;
As I stand aloof and look, there is to me something profoundly affecting in large masses of men, following the lead of those who do not believe in men.

AMERICAN FEUILLAGE.

First published in 1860.

America always ![1]
Always our own feuillage !
Always Florida's green peninsula ! Always the priceless delta of Louisiana ! Always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas !
Always California's golden hills and hollows—and the silver mountains of New Mexico ! Always soft-breath'd Cuba !
Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern Sea—inseparable with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western Seas ;
The area the eighty-third year of These States—the three and a half millions of square miles ;
The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main—the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,
The seven millions of distinct families, and the same number of dwellings—Always these, and more, branching forth into numberless branches ;
Always the free range and diversity ! always the continent of Democracy !
Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers, Kanada, the snows ;
Always these compact lands—lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing the huge oval lakes ;
Always the West, with strong native persons—the increasing density there—the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders ;
All sights, South, North, East—all deeds, promiscuously done at all times,
All characters, movements, growths—a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering ;
On interior rivers, by night, in the glare of pine knots, steamboats wooding up ;

[1] 1860. After line 1 reads "Always me joined with you, whoever you are !"

Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roanoke and Delaware ;
In their northerly wilds, beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks, the hills—or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink ;
In a lonesome inlet, a sheldrake, lost from the flock, sitting on the water, rocking silently ;
In farmers' barns, oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done—they rest standing—they are too tired ;
Afar on arctic ice, the she-walrus lying drowsily, while her cubs play around ;
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd—the farthest polar sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes ;
White drift spooning ahead, where the ship in the tempest dashes ;
On solid land, what is done in cities, as the bells all strike midnight together ;
In primitive woods, the sounds there also sounding—the howl of the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of the elk ;
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead Lake—in summer visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming ;
In lower latitudes, in warmer air, in the Carolinas, the large black buzzard floating slowly, high beyond the tree tops,
Below, the red cedar, festoon'd with tylandria—the pines and cypresses, growing out of the white sand that spreads far and flat ;
Rude boats descending the big Pedee—climbing plants, parasites, with color'd flowers and berries, enveloping huge trees,
The waving drapery on the live oak, trailing long and low, noiselessly waved by the wind ;
The camp of Georgia wagoners, just after dark—the supper-fires, and the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,
Thirty or forty great wagons—the mules, cattle, horses, feeding from troughs,
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-trees—the flames—with the black smoke from the pitch-pine, curling and rising ;
Southern fishermen fishing—the sounds and inlets of North Carolina's coast—the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery—the

large sweep-seines—the windlasses on shore work'd by horses—the clearing, curing, and packing-houses;
Deep in the forest, in piney woods, turpentine[1] dropping from the incisions in the trees — There are the turpentine works,[2]
There are the negroes at work, in good health—the ground in all directions is cover'd with pine straw:
—In Tennessee and Kentucky, slaves busy in the coalings, at the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking;
In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence, joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse;
On rivers, boatmen safely moor'd at night-fall, in their boats, under shelter of high banks,
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or fiddle—others sit on the gunwale, smoking and talking;
Late in the afternoon, the mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing in the Great Dismal Swamp—there are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous moss, the cypress tree, and the juniper tree;
—Northward, young men of Mannahatta—the target company from an excursion returning home at evening—the musket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers presented by women;
Children at play—or on his father's lap a young boy fallen asleep, (how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)
The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the Mississippi—he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eye around;
California life—the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume—the stanch California friendship—the sweet air—the graves one, in passing, meets, solitary, just aside the horse-path;
Down in Texas, the cotton-field, the negro-cabins—drivers driving mules or oxen before rude carts—cotton bales piled on banks and wharves;
Encircling all, vast-darting, up and wide, the American Soul, with equal hemispheres — one Love, one Dilation or Pride;
—In arriere, the peace-talk with the Iroquois, the aborigines—the calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorsement,

[1] 1860 reads "turpentine and tar."
[2] 1860 reads "There is the turpentine distillery."

The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then toward the earth,
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and guttural exclamations,
The setting out of the war-party—the long and stealthy march,
The single-file—the swinging hatchets—the surprise and slaughter of enemies;
—All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of These States—reminiscences, all institutions,
All These States, compact—Every square mile of These States, without excepting a particle—you also—me also,
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's fields,
Me, observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies, shuffling between each other, ascending high in the air;
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects—the fall traveler southward, but returning northward early in the spring;
The country boy at the close of the day, driving the herd of cows, and shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the road-side;
The city wharf—Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, San Francisco,
The departing ships, when the sailors heave at the capstan;
—Evening—me in my room—the setting sun,
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing the swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the centre of the room, darting athwart, up and down, casting swift shadows in specks on the opposite wall, where the shine is;
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of listeners;
Males, females, immigrants, combinations—the copiousness—the individuality[1] of The States, each for itself—the money-makers;
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces—the windlass, lever, pulley—All certainties,
The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,
In space, the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the firm earth, the lands, my lands;
O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I become a part of that, whatever it is;

[1] 1860 reads "the individuality and sovereignty of The State."

Southward there, I screaming, with wings slowly flapping, with the myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida —or in Louisiana, with pelicans breeding;

Otherways, there, atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio Grande, the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the Saskatchawan, or the Osage, I with the spring waters laughing and skipping and running;

Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I, with parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and aquatic plants;

Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing the crow with its bill, for amusement—And I triumphantly twittering;

The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh themselves—the body of the flock feed—the sentinels outside move around with erect heads watching, and are from time to time reliev'd by other sentinels—And I feeding and taking turns with the rest;

In Kanadian forests, the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by hunters, rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—And I, plunging at the hunters, corner'd and desperate;

In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the countless workmen working in the shops,

And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in myself than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,

Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body no more inevitably united, part to part, and made one identity, any more than my lands are inevitably united, and made ONE IDENTITY;

Nativities, climates, the grass of the great Pastoral Plains;

Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war,[1] good and evil—these me,

These affording, in all their particulars, endless feuillage to me and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew of the union of them, to afford the like to you?

Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that you also be eligible as I am?

How can I but, as here, chanting, invite you for yourself to collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of These States?

[1] "war" added in 1870.

SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE.

First published in 1856.

1

WEAPON,[1] shapely, naked, wan!
Head from the mother's bowels drawn!
Wooded flesh and metal bone! limb only one, and lip only one!
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown! helve produced from a little seed sown!
Resting the grass amid and upon,
To be lean'd, and to lean on.

Strong shapes, and attributes of strong shapes—masculine trades, sights and sounds;
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music;
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind;
Welcome are lands of pine and oak;
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig;
Welcome are lands of gold;
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize—welcome those of grape;
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice;
Welcome the cotton-lands—welcome those of potato and sweet potato;
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, openings;
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, lands—welcome the teeming soil of orchards, flax, hemp;
Welcome the measureless grazing, more hard-faced lands;
Welcome just as much the gold, or wheat and fruit lands;
Lands rich as lands of gold, lands of the manly and rugged ores;
Lands of mines, lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc;
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc;
LANDS OF IRON! lands of the make of the axe!

1 1856 '60. For "Weapon" read "Broad-Axe."

3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it;
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd for a garden,
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves, after the storm is lull'd,
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,
The thought of ships struck in the storm, and put on their beam ends, and the cutting away of masts;
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses and barns;
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of men, families, goods,
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it—the outset anywhere,[1]
The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men, with their clear untrimm'd faces,
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves,
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the boundless impatience of restraint,
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types, the solidification;
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard schooners L[illegible] and sloops, the raftsman, the pioneer,
[illegible]men in their winter camp, day-break in the woods, stripes
The glad now on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,
natural sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the
The blazing fire at[illegible] of the woods, the strong day's work,
bed of hemlock[illegible], the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the
—The house-builder at wor[illegible]ghs, and the bear-skin;
The preparatory jointing, squari[illegible]cities or anywhere,
The hoist-up of beams, the push of [illegible]m in their places, laying sawing, mortising,
them regular,

[1] "the outset anywhere" added in 1860. After line 33, 1856 reads "The Year! of These States, the weapons that year began with, scythe, pitch-fork, club, horse-pistol."

Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises, according as they were prepared,
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their curv'd limbs,
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by posts and braces,
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,
The floor-men forcing the planks close, to be nail'd,
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;
The huge store-house carried up in the city, well under way,
The six framing-men, two in the middle, and two at each end, carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands, rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to rear,
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels striking[1] the bricks,
The bricks, one after another, each laid so workmanlike in its place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and the steady replenishing by the hod-men;
—Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-grown apprentices,
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log, shaping it toward the shape of a mast,
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the pine
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in floats, tumes;
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bu[illegible] forth in the stays against the sea;
—The city fireman—the fire that sudde[illegible], the nimble stepping and close-pack'd square,
The arriving engines, the hoarse s[illegible] daring,
The strong command thro[illegible] the fire-trumpets, the falling in line, the rise and [illegible] of the arms forcing the water,
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets—the bringing to bear of the hooks and ladders, and their execution,

[1] "striking" added in 1860.

The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through floors, if the fire smoulders under them,
The crowd with their lit faces, watching—the glare and dense shadows;
—The forger at his forge-furnace, and the user of iron after him,
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and temperer,
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel, and trying the edge with his thumb,
The one who clean-shapes the handle, and sets it firmly in the socket;
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users also,
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,
The death-howl, the limpsey tumbling body, the rush of friend and foe thither,
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the truce and parley;
The sack of an old city in its time,
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and disorderly,
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women in the gripe of brigands,
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old persons despairing,
The list of war, the cruelties of creeds,
The power of all executive deeds and words, just or unjust,
The power of personality, just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!
What invigorates life, invigorates death,
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,
And the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as the delicatesse of the earth and of man,
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?
Do you think the great[1] city endures?
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution? or the best-built steamships?
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of engineering, forts, armaments?

Away! These are not to be cherish'd for themselves;
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for them;
The show passes, all does well enough of course,
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

The great[2] city is that which has the greatest man or woman;
If it be a few ragged huts, it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

5

The place where the great[3] city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce,
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new comers, or the anchor-lifters of the departing,
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings, or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools—nor the place where money is plentiest,
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards;
Where the city stands that is beloved by these, and loves them in return, and understands them;[4]
Where no monuments exist to heroes, but in the common words and deeds;
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place;[5]
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws;

[1] 1856 '60. For "great" read "greatest."
[2] 1856 '60. For "great" read "greatest."
[3] 1856 '60. For "great" read "greatest."
[4] 1856 '60. After line 116 read "Where there may be seen going every day in the streets, with their arms familiar to the shoulders of their friends."
[5] 1856 '60. After line 118 read "Where behavior is the finest of the fine arts."

Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases;
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending[1] audacity of elected persons;
Where fierce men and women pour forth, as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves;
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority;
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal—and President, Mayor, Governor, and what not, are agents for pay;
Where children are taught to[2] be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves;
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs;
Where speculations on the Soul are encouraged;
Where women walk in public processions in the streets, the same as the men,
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men;[3]
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands;
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands;
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands;
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
There the great[4] city stands.

6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed![5]
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a man's or woman's look!

All waits, or goes by default, till a strong being appears;
A strong being is the proof of the race, and of the ability of the universe;
When he or she appears, materials are overaw'd,
The dispute on the Soul stops,
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?

[1] "never-ending" added in 1860.
[2] 1856 '60 read "Where children are taught from the jump that they are to be laws to themselves," etc.
[3] 1856 '60 add "and are appealed to by the orator the same as the men."
[4] 1856 '60. For "great" read "greatest."
[5] 1856 '60 read "How beggarly appear poems, arguments, orations, before an electric deed."

What is your respectability now?
What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books, now?
Where are your jibes of being now?
Where are your cavils about the Soul now?[1]

7

A sterile landscape covers the ore—there is as good as the best, for all the forbidding appearance;
There is the mine, there are the miners;
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd; the hammers-men are at hand with their tongs and hammers;
What always served, and always serves, is at hand.

Than this, nothing has better served—it has served all:
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long ere the Greek:
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any;
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindostanee;
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi—served those whose relics remain in Central America;
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn pillars, and the druids;[2]
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-cover'd hills of Scandinavia;
Served those who, time out of mind, made on the granite walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean-waves;
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths—served the pastoral tribes and nomads;
Served the long, long[3] distant Kelt—served the hardy pirates of the Baltic;
Served before any of those, the venerable and harmless men of Ethiopia;

[1] After line 146, 1856 '60 '67 read:
"Was that your best? Were those your vast and solid?
Riches, opinions, politics, institutions to part obediently from the path of one man or woman!
The centuries and all authority, to be trod under the foot-soles of one man or woman!"

[2] 1856 '60 add "and the bloody body laid in the hollow of the great stone."

[3] 1856 '60 for "long, long" read "incalculably."

Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure, and the
making of those for war;
Served all great works on land, and all great works on the sea;
For the mediæval ages, and before the mediæval ages;
Served not the living only, then as now, but served the dead.

8

I see the European headsman;
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs, and strong
naked arms,
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately, European headsman?
Whose is that blood upon you, so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs;
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,
Ghosts of dead lords,[1] uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers,
rejected kings,
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains, and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause;
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out;
(Mind you, O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run
out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe;
Both blade and helve are clean;
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles—they clasp
no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless;
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy—I see no longer any
axe upon it;
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own
race—the newest, largest race.

9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you;
I have what I have.)

[1] 1856. For "lords" reads "princes."

The axe leaps!
The solid forest gives fluid utterances;
They tumble forth, they rise and form,
Hut, tent, landing, survey,
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house, library,
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, shutter, turret, porch,
Hoe, rake, pitch-fork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane, mallet, wedge, rounce,
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what not,
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans, or for the poor or sick,
Manhattan steamboats and clippers, taking the measure of all seas.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users, and all that neighbors them,
Cutters down of wood, and haulers of it to the Penobscot or Kennebec,[1]
Dwellers in cabins among the California mountains, or by the little lakes, or on the Columbia,[2]
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande—friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,
Dwellers up north in Minnesota and by the Yellowstone river—dwellers on coasts and off coasts,
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through the ice.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets;
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads;
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, arches;
Shapes of the fleets of barges, towns, lake and canal[3] craft, river craft.

[1] 1856 reads "or St. John's,"
[2] "or on the Columbia" added in 1860.
[3] "and canal" added in 1870.

The shapes arise !
Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western[1] Seas, and in many a bay and by-place,
The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hackmatack-roots for knees,
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the workmen busy outside and inside,
The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise !
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud ;
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts of the bride's bed ;
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle ;
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers' feet ;
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the friendly parents and children,
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man and woman—the roof over the well-married young man and woman,
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise !
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of him or her seated in the place ;[2]
The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker ;
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs, trod by sneaking footsteps ;
The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome couple ;

[1] 1856. For "Eastern and Western Seas" reads "Atlantic and Pacific."
[2] 1856 '60. After line 227 read "The shape of the pill-box, the disgraceful ointment-box, the nauseous application, and him or her applying it."

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings and losings ;[1]
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd arms,
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.[2]

The shapes arise !
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances ;
The door passing the dissever'd friend, flush'd and in haste ;
The door that admits good news and bad news ;
The door whence the son left home, confident and puff'd up ;
The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous absence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.[3]

II

Her shape arises,
She, less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever ;
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross and soil'd ;
She knows the thoughts as she passes—nothing is conceal'd from her ;
She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor ;
She is the best belov'd—it is without exception—she has no reason to fear, and she does not fear ;
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle to her as she passes ;
She is silent—she is possess'd of herself—they do not offend her ;
She receives them as the laws of nature receive them—she is strong,
She too is a law of nature—there is no law stronger than she is.[4]

[1] 1856 '60. After line 227 read "The shape of the slats of the bed of a corrupted body, the bed of the corruption of gluttony or alcoholic drinks."
[2] 1856 '60 '67 read "the sickening dangling of the rope."
[3] After line 239, 1856 '60 read "Their shapes arise, the shapes of full-sized men !
Men taciturn yet loving, used to the open air, and the manners of the open air,
Saying their ardor in native forms, saying the old response,
Take what I have then, (saying fain,) take the pay you approached for,
Take the white tears of my blood, if that is what you are after."
[4] After line 249, 1856 '60 read "His shape arises,

12

The main shapes arise!
Shapes of Democracy, total—result of centuries;
Shapes, ever projecting other shapes;[1]
Shapes of turbulent manly cities;
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,
Shapes bracing the earth, and braced with the whole earth.

Arrogant, masculine, naïve, rowdyish,
Laugher, weeper, worker, idler, citizen, countryman,
Saunterer of woods, stander upon hills, summer swimmer in rivers or by the sea,
Of pure American breed, of reckless health, his body perfect, free from taint from top to toe, free forever from headache and dyspepsia, clean-breathed,
Ample-limbed, a good feeder, weight a hundred and eighty pounds, full-blooded, six feet high, forty inches round the breast and back,
Countenance sun-burnt, bearded, calm, unrefined,
Reminder of animals, meeter of savage and gentleman on equal terms,
Attitudes lithe and erect, costume free, neck gray and open, of slow movement on foot,
Passer of his right arm round the shoulders of his friends, companion of the street,
Persuader always of people to give him their sweetest touches, and never their meanest,
A Manhattanese bred, fond of Brooklyn, fond of Broadway, fond of the life of the wharves and the great ferries,
Enterer everywhere, welcomed everywhere, easily understood after all,
Never offering others, always offering himself, corroborating his phrenology,
Voluptuous, inhabitive, combative, conscientious, alimentive, intuitive, of copious friendship, sublimity, firmness, self-esteem, comparison, individuality, form, locality, eventuality,
Avowing by life, manners, works, to contribute illustrations of results of The States,
Teacher of the unquenchable creed, namely, egotism,
Inviter of others continually henceforth to try their strength against his.

The main shapes arise!*
Shapes of Democracy, final—result of centuries,
Shapes of those that do not joke with life, but are in earnest with life,
Shapes, ever projecting other shapes,
Shapes of a hundred Free States, begetting another hundred north and south,
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,
Shapes of an untamed breed of young men, and natural persons,
Shapes of the women fit for These States,
Shapes of the composition of all the varieties of the earth,
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,
Shapes bracing the whole earth, and braced with the whole earth."

[1] After line 252, 1867 reads "Shapes of a hundred Free States begetting another hundred."

* 1856 reads "The shapes arise!
Shapes of America, shapes of centuries."

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD.

First published in 1856. In that edition and that of 1860 under title of "Poem of the Road."

1

AFOOT and light-hearted, I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me, leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune—I myself[1] am good fortune;
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Strong and content, I travel the open road.

The earth—that is sufficient;
I do not want the constellations any nearer;
I know they are very well where they are;
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens;
I carry them, men and women—I carry them with me wherever I go;
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them;
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

2

You road I enter upon and look around![2] I believe you are not all that is here;
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, neither preference or denial;
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are not denied;
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,

[1] "myself" added in 1867.
[2] 1856 '60 read "Your road I travel and look around!"

The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,
The early market man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the return back from the town,
They pass—I also pass—anything passes—none can be interdicted;
None but are accepted—none but are dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings, and give them shape!
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers![1]
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!
I think you are latent with unseen[2] existences—you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!
From all that has been near you, I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me;
From the living and the dead I think you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
The picture alive, every part in its best light,

[1] 1856 '60 '67. After line 26 read "You animals moving serenely over the earth!
You birds that wing yourselves through the air! you insects!
You sprouting growths from the farmers' fields! you stalks and weeds by the fences!"

[2] 1856 '60 for "unseen" read "curious."

The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it is not wanted,
The cheerful voice of the public road—the gay fresh sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel ! O public road ! do you say to me, *Do not leave me ?*
Do you say, *Venture not ? If you leave me, you are lost ?*
Do you say, *I am already prepared—I am well-beaten and undenied—adhere to me ?*

O public road ! I say back, I am not afraid to leave you—yet I love you ;
You express me better than I can express myself ;
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all great poems also ;
I think I could stop here myself, and do miracles ;
(My judgments, thoughts, I henceforth try by the open air, the road ;)[1]
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and whoever beholds me shall like me ;
I think whoever I see must be happy.

5

From this hour, freedom !
From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,
Listening to others, and considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space ;[2]
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought ;
I did not know I held so much goodness.

[1] Line 50 added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 '67. For "space" read "air."

All seems beautiful to me;
I can repeat over to men and women, You have done such good to me, I would do the same to you.

I will recruit for myself and you as I go;
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go;
I will toss the new gladness and roughness among them;
Whoever denies me, it shall not trouble me;
Whoever accepts me, he or she shall be blessed, and shall bless me.

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear, it would not amaze me;
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd, it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,
It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Here[1] a great personal deed has room;
A great deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law, and mocks all authority and all argument against it.

Here is the test of wisdom;
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools;
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it, to another not having it;
Wisdom is of the Soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities, and is content,
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the Soul.

Now I reëxamine philosophies and religions,
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds, and along the landscape and flowing currents.

[1] 1856'60'67. Line 74 begins "Here is space—here a great," etc.

Here is realization;
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him;
The past, the future, majesty, love[1]—if they are vacant of you, you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness—it is not previously fashion'd—it is apropos;
Do you know what it is, as you pass, to be loved by strangers?
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the Soul;
The efflux of the Soul comes from within, through embower'd gates, ever provoking questions:[2]
These yearnings, why are they? These thoughts in the darkness, why are they?
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me, the sun-light expands my blood?
Why, when they leave me, do my pennants of joy sink flat and lank?
Why are there trees I never walk under, but large and melodious thoughts descend upon me?
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees, and always drop fruit as I pass;)
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?
What with some driver, as I ride on the seat by his side?
What with some fisherman, drawing his seine by the shore, as I walk by, and pause?
What gives me to be free to a woman's or man's good-will? What gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the Soul is happiness—here is happiness;
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times;
Now it flows unto us—we are rightly charged.

1 1856 '60 '67 read "The animals, the past, the future, light, space, majesty, love, if they," etc.

2 1856 '60 read "The efflux of the soul comes through beautiful gates of laws, provoking questions."

Here rises the fluid and attaching character;
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of man and woman;
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)

Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love of young and old;
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments;
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9

Allons! whoever you are, come travel with me!
Traveling with me, you find what never tires.

The earth never tires;
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first—Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first;
Be not discouraged—keep on—there are divine things, well envelop'd;
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here!
However sweet these laid-up stores—however convenient this dwelling, we cannot remain here;
However shelter'd this port, and however calm these waters, we must not anchor here;
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us, we are permitted to receive it but a little while.

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater;
We will sail pathless and wild seas;
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements!
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;

Allons! from all formules!
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests!

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance;
None may come to the trial, till he or she bring courage and health.

Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself;
Only those may come, who come in sweet and determin'd bodies;
No diseas'd person—no rum-drinker or venereal taint is permitted here.

I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes;
We convince by our presence.

11

Listen! I will be honest with you;
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes;
These are the days that must happen to you:

You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd—you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction, before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart,
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of those who remain behind you;
What beckonings of love you receive, you shall only answer with passionate kisses of parting,
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands toward you.

12

Allons! after the GREAT COMPANIONS! and to belong to them!
They too are on the road! they are the swift and majestic men: they are the greatest women.

Over that which hinder'd them—over that which retarded—
passing impediments large or small,
Committers of crimes, committers of many beautiful virtues,
Enjoyers of calms of seas, and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,
Habitués of many distant countries, habitués of far-distant dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of children, bearers of children,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers down of coffins,
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years—the curious years, each emerging from that which preceded it,
Journeyers as with companions, namely, their own diverse phases,
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,
Journeyers gayly with their own youth—Journeyers with their bearded and well-grain'd manhood,
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or womanhood,
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the universe,
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless, as it was beginningless,
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys;
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you—however long, but it stretches and waits for you;
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,
To see no possession but you may possess it—enjoying all without labor or purchase—abstracting the feast, yet not abstracting one particle of it;

To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant
villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-married couple,
and the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass
through,
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you
go,
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter
them—to gather the love out of their hearts,
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you leave
them behind you,
To know the universe itself as a road—as many roads—as roads
for traveling souls.

14

The Soul travels;
The body does not travel as much as the soul;
The body has just as great a work as the soul, and parts away at
last for the journeys of the soul.

All parts away for the progress of souls;
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments,—all that was or
is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches
and corners before the procession of Souls along the grand
roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the grand
roads of the universe, all other progress is the needed
emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble,
dissatisfied,
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men,
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where
they go;
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something
great.

15

Allons! whoever you are! come forth!
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house,[1]
though you built it, or though it has been built for you.

[1] 1856 reads "You must not stay in your house, though you built it," etc.

Allons! out of the dark confinement!
It is useless to protest—I know all, and expose it.

Behold, through you as bad as the rest,
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and trimm'd faces,
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confession;[1]
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it goes,[2]
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite and bland in the parlors,
In the cars of rail-roads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,
Home to the houses of men and women,[3] at the table, in the bed-room, everywhere,
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers,
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,
Speaking of anything else, but never of itself.

16

Allons! through struggles and wars!
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? nature?
Now understand me well—It is provided in the essence of things, that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle—I nourish active rebellion;
He going with me must go well arm'd;

[1] 1856 '60 read "No husband, no wife, no friend, no lover, so trusted as to hear the confession."
[2] 1856 '60 add "Open and above-board it goes."
[3] 1856 '60 add "among their families."

He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies, desertions.[1]

17

Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well.

Allons! be not detain'd!
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Mon enfant! I give you my hand!
I give you my love, more precious than money,
I give you myself, before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

I SIT AND LOOK OUT.

First published in 1860.

I SIT and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame;
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men, at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done;
I see, in low life, the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected, gaunt, desperate;
I see the wife misused by her husband—I see the treacherous seducer of young women;
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love, attempted to be hid—I see these sights on the earth;
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny—I see martyrs and prisoners;

[1] 1856. For "desertions" reads "contentions."

I observe a famine at sea—I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be kill'd, to preserve the lives of the rest;
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;
All these—All the meanness and agony without end, I sitting, look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.

ME IMPERTURBE.

First published in 1860.

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,
Master of all, or mistress of all—aplomb in the midst of irrational things,
Imbued as they—passive, receptive, silent as they,
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less important than I thought;
Me private, or public, or menial, or solitary—all these subordinate, (I am eternally equal with the best—I am not subordinate;)
Me toward the Mexican Sea, or in the Mannahatta, or the Tennessee, or far north, or inland,
A river man, or a man of the woods, or of any farm-life in These States, or of the coast, or the lakes, or Kanada,
Me, wherever my life is[1] lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies!
O to confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN YOUR LAP, CAMERADO.

As I lay with my head in your lap, Camerado,
The confession I made I resume—what I said to you in the open air I resume:
I know I am restless, and make others so;
I know my words are weapons, full of danger, full of death;
(Indeed I am myself the real soldier;
It is not he, there, with his bayonet, and not the red-striped artilleryman;)

[1] 1860 reads "to be lived," etc.

For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws, to unsettle them ;
I am more resolute because all have denied me, than I could ever have been had all accepted me ;
I heed not, and have never heeded, either experience, cautions, majorities, nor ridicule ;
And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing to me ;
And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing to me ;
. . . Dear camerado ! I confess I have urged you onward with me, and still urge you, without the least idea what is our destination,
Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and defeated.

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY.

First published in 1856 under title of "Sun-Down Poem."

1

FLOOD-TIDE below me ![1] I watch you face to face ;
Clouds of the west ! sun there half an hour high ! I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes ! how curious you are to me !
On the ferry-boats, the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home,[2] are more curious to me than you suppose ;
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence, are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things, at all hours of the day ;
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme—myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated, yet part of the scheme ;
The similitudes of the past, and those of the future ;

[1] 1856 reads "Flood-tide of the river, flow on !" etc.
[2] 1856 "returning home" added in 1860.

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings
—on the walk in the street, and the passage over the river;
The current rushing so swiftly, and swimming with me far away;
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them;
The certainty of others—the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry, and cross from shore to shore;
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide;
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east;
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high;
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring in of the flood-tide, the falling back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, neither time or place—distance avails not;
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence;
I project myself—also I return—I am with you, and know how it is.

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt;
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd;
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd;
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood, yet was hurried;
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the thick-stem'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river, the sun half an hour high;
I watched the Twelfth-month[1] sea-gulls—I saw them high in the air, floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,

[1] 1856 reads "December sea-gulls."

I saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies, and left the rest in strong shadow,
I saw the slow-wheeling circles, and the gradual edging toward the south.

I too saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light around the shape of my head in the sun-lit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and southwestward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the arriving ships,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops—saw the ships at anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging, or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sun-set,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolicsome crests and glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the granite store-houses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by the barges—the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighboring shore, the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black, contrasted with wild red and yellow light, over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

4

These, and all else, were to me the same as they are to you;
I project myself a moment to tell you—also I return.

I loved well those cities;
I loved well the stately and rapid river;
The men and women I saw were all near to me;

Others the same—others who look back on me, because I look'd
forward to them;
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it, then, between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between
us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails
not.

6

I too lived[1]—Brooklyn, of ample hills, was mine;
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan Island, and bathed in the
waters around it;
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day, among crowds of people, sometimes they came upon
me,
In my walks home late at night, or as I lay in my bed, they came
upon me.

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution;
I too had receiv'd identity by my Body;
That I was, I knew was of my body—and what I should be, I
knew I should be of my body.

7

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw patches down upon me also;
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious;
My great thoughts, as I supposed them, were they not in reality
meagre? would not people laugh at me?

It is not you alone who know what it is to be evil;
I am he who knew what it was to be evil;
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant;
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,

[1] 1856 reads "I too lived." 1860 adds "(I was of old Brooklyn.)" 1867 reads as above.

The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting.

8

But I was Manhattanese, friendly and proud![1]
I was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me approaching or passing,
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,
Saw many I loved in the street, or ferry-boat, or public assembly, yet never told them a word,
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

9

Closer yet I approach you;
What thought you have of me, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in advance;
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?
Who knows but I am enjoying this?
Who knows but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see me?

It is not you alone, nor I alone;
Not a few races, nor a few generations, nor a few centuries;
It is that each came, or comes, or shall come, from its due emission,[2]
From the general centre of all, and forming a part of all:[3]
Everything indicates—the smallest does, and the largest does;
A necessary film envelopes all, and envelopes the Soul for a proper time.

[1] 1856 '60 read "free, friendly and proud."
[2] 1856 '60 '67 add "without fail, either now, or then, or henceforth."
[3] Line 98 added in 1870.

10

Now I am curious what sight can ever be more stately and admirable to me than my mast-hemm'd Manhattan,
My river and sun-set, and my scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide,
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated lighter;
Curious what Gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach;
Curious what is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face,
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you.

We understand, then, do we not?
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?
What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish, is accomplish'd, is it not?
What the push of reading could not start, is started by me personally, is it not?

11

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!
Gorgeous clouds of the sun-set! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me;
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta!—stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn![1]
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution![2]
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house, or street, or public assembly!
Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my nighest name!
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!
Play the old role, the role that is great or small, according as one makes it!

[1] After line 115, 1856 '60 '67 read "Bully for you! you proud, friendly, free Manhattanese."

[2] After line 117, 1856 '60 '67 read "Blab, blush, lie, steal, you or I or any one after us."

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you;
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current;
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air;
Receive the summer sky, you water! and faithfully hold it, till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you;
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the sun-lit water;
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset;
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses;
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are;
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul;
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas;
Thrive, cities! bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers;
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual;
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

12

We descend upon you and all things—we arrest you all;
We realize the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids;
Through you color, form, location, sublimity, ideality;
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the suggestions and determinations of ourselves.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers! you novices!
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward;
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us;
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within us;
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also;

You furnish your parts toward eternity ;
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

WITH ANTECEDENTS.

First published in 1860.

1

With antecedents ;
With my fathers and mothers, and the accumulations of past ages ;
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here, as I am :
With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome ;
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb, and the Saxon ;
With antique maritime ventures,—with laws, artizanship, wars and journeys ;
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle ;
With the sale of slaves—with enthusiasts—with the troubadour, the crusader, and the monk ;
With those old continents whence we have come to this new continent ;
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there ;
With the fading religions and priests ;
With the small shores we look back to from our own large and present shores ;
With countless years drawing themselves onward, and arrived at these years ;
You and Me arrived—America arrived, and making this year ;
This year ! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

2

O but it is not the years—it is I—it is You ;
We touch all laws, and tally all antecedents ;
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk, and the knight—we easily include them, and more ;
We stand amid time, beginningless and endless—we stand amid evil and good ;
All swings around us—there is as much darkness as light ;
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around us ;
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, even as I, amid these vehement days,)[1]
I have the idea of all, and am all, and believe in all;
I believe materialism is true, and spiritualism is true—I reject no part.

Have I forgotten any part?
Come to me, whoever and whatever, till I give you recognition.

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews;
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god;
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, without exception;
I assert that all past days were what they should have been;
And that they could no-how have been better than they were,
And that to-day is what it should be—and that America is,
And that to-day and America could no-how be better than they are.

3

In the name of These States, and in your and my name, the Past,
And in the name of These States, and in your and my name, the Present time.

I know that the past was great, and the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
(For the sake of him I typify—for the common average man's sake—your sake, if you are he;)
And that where I am, or you are, this present day, there is the centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning, to us, of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come.

[1] 1860 reads "as for me." 1867 adds "(torn, stormy,") etc.

THE ANSWERER.

NOW LIST TO MY MORNING'S ROMANZA.

First published in 1855. In edition of 1856 under title of "Poem of the Poet."

1

Now list to my morning's romanza—I tell the signs of the Answerer;
To the cities and farms I sing, as they spread in the sunshine before me.[1]

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother;
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his brother?
Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand[2] before the young man face to face, and take[3] his right hand in my left hand, and his left hand in my right hand,
And I answer for his brother, and for men, and I answer for him that answers for all, and send these signs.[4]

2

Him all wait for—him all yield up to—his word is decisive and final,
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves, as amid light,
Him they immerse, and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape, people, animals,

[1] Lines 1 and 2 added in 1867. "I tell the signs of the Answerer" added in 1870.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 '67. For "stand" read "stood."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 '67. For "take" read "took."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 '67. Line 7 reads "And I answered for his brother, and for men, and I answered for the Poet, and sent these signs."

The profound earth and its attributes, and the unquiet ocean, (so tell I my morning's romanza;)[1]
All enjoyments and properties, and money, and whatever money will buy,
The best farms—others toiling and planting, and he unavoidably reaps,
The noblest and costliest cities—others grading and building, and he domiciles there;
Nothing for any one, but what is for him—near and far are for him, the ships in the offing,
The perpetual shows and marches on land, are for him, if they are for any body.

He puts things in their attitudes;
He puts to-day out of himself, with plasticity and love;
He places his own city, times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the rest never shame them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the answerer;
What can be answer'd he answers—and what cannot be answer'd, he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

3

A man is a summons and challenge;
(It is vain to skulk—Do you hear that mocking and laughter? Do you hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride, beat up and down, seeking to give satisfaction;
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go freshly and gently and safely, by day or by night;
He has the pass-key of hearts—to him the response of the prying of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal—the flow of beauty is not more welcome or universal than he is;
The person he favors by day, or sleeps with at night, is blessed.

[1] "(so tell I my morning's romanza;)" added in 1867.

4

Every existence has its idiom—everything has an idiom and tongue;
He resolves all tongues into his own, and bestows it upon men, and any man translates, and any man translates himself also;
One part does not counteract another part—he is the joiner—he sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike, *How are you, friend?* to the President at his levee,
And he says, *Good-day, my brother!* to Cudge that hoes in the sugar-field,
And both understand him, and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the Capitol,
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to another, *Here is our equal, appearing and new.*

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier,[1] and the sailors that he has follow'd the sea,
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love them;
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it, or has follow'd it,
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems—a Russ to the Russ—usual and near, removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, and the German is sure, and the Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure;
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi, or St. Lawrence, or Sacramento, or Hudson, or Paumanok Sound,[2] claims him.

[1] 1855 '56 '60. For "soldier" read "captain."
[2] 1855 '56. For "Paumanok Sound" read "Delaware."

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood;
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see themselves in the ways of him—he strangely transmutes them,
They are not vile any more—they hardly know themselves, they are so grown.[1]

THE INDICATIONS.

First published in 1860.

THE indications, and tally of time;[2]
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophs;
Time, always without flaw, indicates itself in parts;
What always indicates the poet, is the crowd of the pleasant company of singers, and their words;
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light or dark—but the words of the maker of poems are the general light and dark;
The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,
He is the glory and extract thus far, of things, and of the human race.

The singers do not beget—only the POET begets;
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough—but rare has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of poems, the Answerer,[3]
(Not every century, or every five centuries, has contain'd such a day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensible names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After line 52 add:
"Do* you think it would be good to be the writer of melodious verses?
Well, it would be good to be the writer of melodious verses;
But what are verses beyond the flowing character you could have? or beyond beautiful manners and behavior?
Or beyond one manly or affectionate deed of an apprentice-boy? or old woman? or man that has been in prison, or is likely to be in prison?"

[2] Line 1 added in 1867.

[3] "the Answerer" added in 1870.

* "Do" added in 1856.

The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-singer, echo-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, or something else.

All this time, and at all times, wait the words of true[1] poems;
The words of true poems do not merely please,[2]
The true poets are not followers of beauty, but the august masters of beauty;
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers and fathers,
The words of poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health, rudeness of body, withdrawnness,
Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness—such are some of the words of poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the answerer;[3]
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist —all these underlie the maker of poems, the answerer.[4]

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you to form for yourself, poems, religions, politics, war, peace, behavior, histories, essays, romances, and everything else,
They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty—they are sought,
Forever touching them, or close upon them, follows beauty, longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death—yet are they not the finish, but rather the outset,
They bring none to his or her terminus, or to be content and full;
Whom they take, they take into space, to behold the birth of stars, to learn one of the meanings,
To launch off with absolute faith—to sweep through the ceaseless rings, and never be quiet again.

[1] "true" added in 1870.
[2] Lines 15 and 16 added in 1870.
[3] "the answerer" added in 1870.
[4] "the answerer" added in 1870.

POETS TO COME.

First published in 1860.

POETS to come! orators, singers, musicians to come![1]
Not to-day is to justify me, and answer what I am for;[2]
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than before known,
Arouse! Arouse—for you must justify me—you must answer.[3]

I myself[4] but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment, only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along, without fully stopping, turns a casual look upon you, and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING.

First published in 1860 where line 1 reads "American Mouth-Songs."

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics—each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;

[1] "orators, singers, musicians to come!" added in 1870.

[2] 1860 '67 read "Not to-day is to justify me, and Democracy, and what we are for."

[3] 1860 '67. For line 4 read "You must justify me." After line 4, 1860 reads "Indeed, if it were not for you, what would I be?
What is the little I have done, except to arouse you?

I depend on being realized, long hence, where the broad fat prairies spread, and thence to Oregon and California inclusive,
I expect that the Texan and the Arizonian, ages hence, will understand me,
I expect that the future Carolinian and Georgian will understand me and love me,
I expect that Kanadians, a hundred, and perhaps many hundred years from now, in winter, in the splendor of the snow and woods, or on the icy lakes, will take me with them, and permanently enjoy themselves with me.

Of to-day I know I am momentary, untouched—I am the bard of the future,
I but write one or two indicative words for the future," etc.

[4] "myself" added in 1870.

The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat—the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench—the hatter singing as he stands;
The wood-cutter's song—the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the noon intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother—or of the young wife at work—or of the girl sewing or washing—Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else;
The day what belongs to the day—At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.[1]

THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE.

First published in 1867.

By the City Dead-House, by the gate,
As idly sauntering, wending my way from the clangor,
I curious pause—for lo! an outcast form, a poor dead prostitute brought;
Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd—it lies on the damp brick pavement;
The divine woman, her body—I see the Body—I look on it alone,
That house once full of passion and beauty—all else I notice not;
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet, nor odors morbific impress me;
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that delicate fair house—that ruin!
That immortal house, more than all the rows of dwellings ever built!
Or white-domed Capitol itself, with majestic figure surmounted—or all the old high-spired cathedrals;
That little house alone, more than them all—poor, desperate house!
Fair, fearful wreck! tenement of a Soul! itself a Soul!
Unclaim'd, avoided house! take one breath from my tremulous lips;
Take one tear, dropt aside as I go, for thought of you,

[1] 1860 adds "Come! some of you! still be flooding The States with hundreds and thousands of mouth-songs fit for The States only.

Dead house of love! house of madness and sin, crumbled! crush'd!
House of life—erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor house! dead, even then;
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead, dead, dead.

A FARM PICTURE.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,
A sun-lit pasture field, with cattle and horses feeding;
And haze, and vista, and the far horizon, fading away.[1]

CAROL OF OCCUPATIONS.

First published in 1855. In edition of 1856 under title of "Poem of The Daily Work of the Workmen and Workwomen of These States." 1860 as No. 3, "Chants Democratic." 1867 under title of "To Workingmen."

I

COME closer to me;
Push close, my lovers, and take the best I possess;
Yield closer and closer, and give me the best you possess.

This is unfinish'd business with me—How is it with you?
(I was chill'd with the cold types, cylinder, wet paper between us.)

Male and Female![2]
I pass so poorly with paper and types, I must pass with the contact of bodies and souls.

American masses![3]
I do not thank you for liking me as I am, and liking the touch of me—I know that it is good for you to do so.

[1] Line 3 added in 1870.
[2] "Male and Female" added in 1860.
[3] "American masses" added in 1860

2

This is the carol[1] of occupations ;[2]
In the labor of engines and trades, and the labor of fields, I find the developments,
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen ![3]
Were all educations, practical and ornamental, well display'd out of me, what would it amount to ?
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise statesman, what would it amount to ?
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that satisfy you ?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms ;
A man like me, and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master am I ;
I take no sooner a large price than a small price—I will have my own, whoever enjoys me ;
I will be even with you, and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop, I stand as nigh as the nighest in the same shop ;[4]
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend, I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend ;
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I must be personally as welcome ;
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake ;[5]
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds ?
If you carouse at the table, I[6] carouse at the opposite side of the table ;

[1] 1867. For "carol" reads "poem."
[2] Lines 10, 11, 12 added in 1867.
[3] "Workmen and Workwomen" added in 1860.
[4] 1855'56 read "If you are a workman or workwoman, I stand as nigh as the nighest that works in the same shop."
[5] 1855 reads "If you have become degraded or ill, then I will become so for your sake."
[6] 1855 reads "I say I will carouse," etc.

If you meet some stranger in the streets, and love him or her—
why I often meet[1] strangers in the street, and love them.[2]

Why, what have you thought of yourself?
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

Because your are greasy or pimpled, or that you were once drunk, or a thief,
Or diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute—or are so now;
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?

3

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching;
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether you are alive or no;
I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.[3]

Grown, half-grown, and babe, of this country and every country, in-doors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I see,
And all else behind or through them.

The wife—and she is not one jot less than the husband;
The daughter—and she is just as good as the son;
The mother—and she is every bit as much as the father.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "do I not often meet," etc.

[2] 1855 '56 '60. After line 28 read "If you see a good deal remarkable in me, I see just as much remarkable in you."

[3] 1855 '56 '60. After line 39 read "I see and hear you and what you give and take,
What is there you cannot give and take?
I see not merely that you are polite or white-faced, married, single, citizens of old States, citizens of new States, eminent in some profession, a lady or gentleman in a parlor, or dressed in the jail uniform, or pulpit uniform."
1855 '56 to above add "Not only the free Utahan, Kansian, or Arkansian, not only the free Cuban, not merely the slave, not Mexican native, or Flatfoot, or negro from Africa,
Iroquois eating warflesh, fish-tearer in his lair of rocks and sand, Esquimaux in the dark cold snow-house, Chinese with his transverse eyes, Bedowee, wandering nomad, or tabounshick at the head of his droves."

Offspring of ignorant and poor,[1] boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms, and old fellows working on farms,
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,[2]
All these I see—but nigher and farther the same I see;
None shall escape me, and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need, yet always have,
Not money, amours, dress, eating, but as good;[3]
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of value, but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes home to one now and perpetually;
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed—it eludes discussion and print;
It is not to be put in a book—it is not in this book;
It is for you, whoever you are—it is no farther from you than your hearing and sight are from you;
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest[4]—it is ever provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it;
You may read the President's Message, and read nothing about it there;
Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treasury department, or in the daily papers or the weekly papers,
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any accounts of stock.

4

The sun and stars that float in the open air;
The apple-shaped earth, and we upon it—surely the drift of them is something grand!
I do not know what it is, except that it is grand, and that it is happiness,

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "Offspring of those not rich," etc.

[2] 1855 '56 '60. For line 47 read "The nävie, the simple and hardy, he going to the polls to vote, he who has a good time and he who has a bad time;
Mechanics, Southerners, new arrivals, sailors, man-o'-wars-men, merchant-men, coasters."

[3] 1855 reads "but I bring as good."

[4] 1855 '56 '60. After "readiest" read "it is not them though it is endlessly provoked by them (What is there ready and near you now?)"

And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation,
or bon-mot, or reconnoissance,
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well for
us, and without luck must be a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain con-
tingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity, the
greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things,
the endless pride and out-stretching of man, unspeakable
joys and sorrows,
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the
wonders that fill each minute of time forever,[1]
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?[2]
Have you reckon'd them for a trade,[3] or farm-work? or for the
profits of a store?
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's leisure,
or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd the landscape took substance and form that
it might be painted in a picture?
Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs
sung?
Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious
combinations, and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the
savans?
Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy
names?
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture
itself?

Old institutions—these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and
the practice handed along in manufactures—will we rate
them so high?
Will we rate our cash[4] and business high?—I have no objec-
tion;

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After "forever" read "and each acre of surface and space forever."
[2] Line 70. Added in 1867.
[3] 1855 reads "as mainly for a trade," etc.
[4] 1855. For "cash" read "prudence."

I rate them as high as the highest—then[1] a child born of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand;
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are;
I am this day just as much in love with them as you;
Then I am in love with you,[2] and with all my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine;
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still;
It is not they who give the life—it is you who give the life;
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you.

5

When the psalm sings instead of the singer;[3]
When the script preaches instead of the preacher;
When the pulpit descends and goes, instead of the carver that carved the supporting desk;
When I can touch the body of books, by night or by day, and when they touch my body back again;
When a university course convinces, like a slumbering woman and child convince;
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watchman's daughter;
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite, and are my friendly companions;
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them as I do of men and women like you.

The sum of all known reverence[4] I add up in you, whoever you are;
The President is there in the White House for you—it is not you who are here for him;

[1] 1855. For "then" read "but."
[2] 1855 reads "But I am eternally in love with you," etc. 1856 reads "Then I am eternally in love with you," etc.
[3] Lines 90 to 97, inclusive, in editions of 1855 '56 '60 are placed at the end of the poem.
[4] 1855. For "reverence" reads "value and respect."

The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you—not you here for them;
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month[1] for you;
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the going and coming of commerce and mails, are all for you.

List close, my scholars dear![2]
All doctrines, all politics and civilization, exurge from you;
All sculpture and monuments, and anything inscribed anywhere, are tallied in you;
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach, is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same;
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they all be?
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it;
(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the instruments;
It is not the violins and the cornets—it is not the oboe nor the beating drums, nor the score[3] of the baritone singer singing his sweet romanza—nor that of the men's chorus, nor that of the women's chorus,
It is nearer and farther than they.

6

Will the whole come back then?
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass? is there nothing greater or more?
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic, unseen Soul?[4]

Strange and hard that paradox true I give;[5]
Objects gross and the unseen Soul are one.

[1] 1855 '56. For "Twelfth-month" read "December."
[2] Line 103. Added in 1867.
[3] 1855. For "score" reads "notes."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 read "Does all sit there with you, and here with me?"
[5] From line 117 to end is the reading adopted in 1867. The readings of 1855 '56 '60 differ a little from each other, but in the main are the same as that of 1860, which is as follows:

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards;
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-roofing, shingle-dressing,

The old, forever-new things—you foolish child! the closest, simplest things, this moment with you,
Your person, and every particle that relates to your person,
The pulses of your brain, waiting their chance and encouragement at every deed or sight,
Anything you do in public by day, and anything you do in secret between-days,
What is called right and what is called wrong—what you behold or touch, or what causes your anger or wonder,
The ankle-chain of the slave, the bed of the bed-house, the cards of the gambler, the plates of the forger,
What is seen or learnt in the street, or intuitively learnt,
What is learnt in the public school, spelling, reading, writing, ciphering, the black-board, the teacher's diagrams,
The panes of the windows, all that appears through them, the going forth in the morning, the aimless spending of the day,
(What is it that you made money? What is it that you got what you wanted?)
The usual routine, the work-shop, factory, yard, office, store, desk,
The jaunt of hunting or fishing, and the life of hunting or fishing,
Pasture-life, foddering, milking, herding, and all the personnel and usages,
The plum-orchard, apple-orchard, gardening, seedlings, cuttings, flowers, vines,
Grains, manures, marl, clay, loam, the subsoil plough, the shovel, pick, rake, hoe, irrigation, draining,
The curry-comb, the horse-cloth, the halter, bridle, bits, the very wisps of straw,
The barn and barn-yard, the bins, mangers, mows, racks,
Manufactures, commerce, engineering, the building of cities, every trade carried on there, and the implements of every trade,
The anvil, tongs, hammer, the axe and wedge, the square, mitre, jointer, smoothing-plane,
The plumbob, trowel, level, the wall-scaffold, the work of walls and ceilings, or any mason-work,
The steam-engine, lever, crank, axle, piston, shaft, air-pump, boiler, beam, pulley, hinge, flange, band, bolt, throttle, governors, up and down rods,
The ship's compass, the sailor's tarpaulin, the stays and lanyards, the ground tackle for anchoring or mooring, the life-boat for wrecks,
The sloop's tiller, the pilot's wheel and bell, the yacht or fish-smack—the great gay-pennanted three-hundred-foot steamboat, under full headway, with her proud fat breasts, and her delicate swift-flashing paddles,
The trail, line, hooks, sinkers, and the seine, and hauling the seine,
The arsenal, small-arms, rifles, gunpowder, shot, caps, wadding, ordnance for war, and carriages;
Every-day objects, house-chairs, carpet, bed, counterpane of the bed, him or her sleeping at night, wind blowing, indefinite noises,
The snow-storm or rain-storm, the tow-trowsers, the lodge-hut in the woods, the still-hunt,
City and country, fire-place, candle, gas-light, heater, aqueduct,

Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, ferrying, flagging of side-walks by flaggers,
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and brick-kiln,

The message of the Governor, Mayor, Chief of Police—the dishes of breakfast, dinner, supper,
The bunk-room, the fire-engine, the string-team, the car or truck behind,
The paper I write on or you write on, every word we write, every cross and twirl of the pen, and the curious way we write what we think, yet very faintly,
The directory, the detector, the ledger, the books in ranks on the book-shelves, the clock attached to the wall,
The ring on your finger, the lady's wristlet, the scent-powder, the druggist's vials and jars, the draught of lager-beer,
The etui of surgical instruments, the etui of oculist's or aurist's instruments, or dentist's instruments,
The permutating lock that can be turned and locked as many different ways as there are minutes in a year,
Glass-blowing, nail-making, salt-making, tin-roofing, shingle-dressing, candle-making, lock-making and hanging,
Ship-carpentering, dock-building, fish-curing, ferrying, stone-breaking, flagging of side-walks by flaggers,
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and brick-kiln,
Coal-mines, all that is down there, the lamps in the darkness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,
Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains, or by river-banks, men around feeding the melt with huge crowbars—lumps of ore, the due combining of ore, limestone, coal—the blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at the bottom of the melt at last—the rolling-mill, the stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong clean-shaped T rail for railroads,
Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house, steam-saws, the great mills and factories,
Lead-mines, and all that is done in lead-mines, or with the lead afterward,
Copper-mines, the sheets of copper, and what is formed out of the sheets, and all the work in forming it,
Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades, or window or door lintels—the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,
Oakum, the oakum-chisel, the caulking-iron—the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the fire under the kettle,
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of the sawyer, the screen of the coal-screener, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,
The four-double cylinder press, the hand-press, the frisket and tympan, the compositor's stick and rule, type-setting, making up the forms, all the work of newspaper counters, folders, carriers, news-men,
The implements for daguerreotyping—the tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-maker,
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-making, glazier's implements,
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron.

Coal-mines, and all that is down there,—the lamps in the darkness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,

The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal—the making of all sorts of edged tools,
The ladders and hanging-ropes of the gymnasium, manly exercises, the game of base-ball, running, leaping, pitching quoits,
The designs for wall papers, oil-cloths, carpets, the fancies for goods for women, the book-binder's stamps,
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that is done by brewers, also by wine-makers, also vinegar-makers,
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, coopering, cotton-picking—electro-plating, electrotyping, stereotyping,
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines, ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam-wagons,
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,
The wires of the electric telegraph stretched on land, or laid at the bottom of the sea, and then the message in an instant from a thousand miles off,
The snow-plough, and two engines pushing it—the ride in the express-train of only one car, the swift go through a howling storm—the locomotive, and all that is done about a locomotive,
The bear-hunt or coon-hunt—the bonfire of shavings in the open lot in the city, and the crowd of children watching,
The blows of the fighting-man, the upper-cut, and one-two-three,
Pyrotechny, letting off colored fire-works at night, fancy figures and jets,
Shop-windows, coffins in the sexton's ware-room, fruit on the fruit-stand—beef in the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,
The area of pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalder's tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winter-work of pork-packing,
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice—the barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,
Bread and cakes in the bakery, the milliner's ribbons, the dress-maker's patterns, the tea-table, the home-made sweetmeats;
Cheap literature, maps, charts, lithographs, daily and weekly newspapers,
The column of wants in the one-cent paper, the news by telegraph, amusements, operas, shows,
The business parts of a city, the trottoirs of a city when thousands of well-dressed people walk up and down,
The cotton, woollen, linen you wear, the money you make and spend,
Your room and bed-room, your piano-forte, the stove and cook-pans,
The house you live in, the rent, the other tenants, the deposit in the savings-bank, the trade at the grocery,
The pay on Seventh Day night, the going home, and the purchases;
In them the heft of the heaviest—in them far more than you estimated, and far less also,
In them realities for you and me—in them poems for you and me,
In them, not yourself—you and your Soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation,

Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains, or by the river-banks—men around feeling the melt with huge crowbars—lumps of ore, the due combining of ore, limestone, coal—the blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at the bottom of the melt at last—the rolling-mill, the stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong, clean-shaped T-rail for railroads;

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house, steam-saws, the great mills and factories;

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades, or window or door-lintels—the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,

Oakum, the oakum-chisel, the caulking-iron—the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the fire under the kettle,

The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,

The implements for daguerreotyping—the tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-maker,

Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-making, glazier's implements, 130

In them themes, hints, provokers—if not, the whole earth has no themes, hints, provokers, and never had.

I do not affirm what you see beyond is futile—I do not advise you to stop,
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,
But I say that none lead to greater, sadder, happier, than those lead to.

Will you seek afar off? You surely come back at last,
In things best known to you, finding the best, or as good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding also the sweetest, strongest, lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place, but this place—not for another hour, but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch—always in your friend, brother, nighest neighbor—Woman in your mother, lover, wife,
The popular tastes and occupations taking precedence in poems or any where,
You workwomen and workmen of These States having your own divine and strong life,
Looking the President always sternly in the face, unbending, nonchalant,
Understanding that he is to be kept by you to short and sharp account of himself,
And all else thus far giving place to men and women like you.

O you robust, sacred!
I cannot tell you how I love you;
All I love America for, is contained in men and women like you.

The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal—the making of all sorts of edged tools,
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that is done by brewers, also by wine-makers, also vinegar-makers,
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking—electro-plating, electrotyping, stereotyping,
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines, ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray ;
Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fire-works at night, fancy figures and jets ;
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalder's tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winter-work of pork-packing ;
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice—the barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high piles on wharves and levees ;
The men, and the work of the men, on railroads, coasters, fish-boats, canals ;
The daily routine of your own or any man's life—the shop, yard, store, or factory ;
These shows all near you by day and night—workman ! whoever you are, your daily life !
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in them far more than you estimated, and far less also ;
In them realities for you and me—in them poems for you and me ;
In them, not yourself—you and your Soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation ;
In them the development good—in them, all themes and hints.

I do not affirm what you see beyond is futile—I do not advise you to stop ;
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great ;
But I say that none lead to greater, than those lead to.

7

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,
In things best known to you, finding the best, or as good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lovingest;
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place, but this place—not for another hour, but this hour;
Man in the first you see or touch—always in friend, brother, nighest neighbor—Woman in mother, lover, wife;
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in poems or any where,
You workwomen and workmen of These States having your own divine and strong life,
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

THOUGHTS.

First published in 1860, being part of "Thought 4" in 1860 and 1867 editions.

1

Of ownership—As if one fit to own things could not at pleasure enter upon all, and incorporate them into himself or herself.

2

First published in 1860, being "Thought 2" in 1860 and 1867 editions.

Of waters, forests, hills;
Of the earth at large, whispering through medium of me;
Of vista—Suppose some sight in arriere, through the formative chaos, presuming the growth, fulness, life, now attain'd on the journey;
(But I see the road continued, and the journey ever continued;)
—Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has become supplied—And of what will yet be supplied,
Because all I see and know, I believe to have purport in what will yet be supplied.

THE SLEEPERS.

First published in 1855. In 1856 under title of "Night Poem." In 1860 '67 under title of "Sleep-Chasings."

I

I WANDER all night in my vision,
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping and stopping,
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted, contradictory,
Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretch'd and still!
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their cradles!

The wretched features of ennuyés, the white features of corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces of onanists,
The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their strong-door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-born emerging from gates, and the dying emerging from gates,
The night pervades them and infolds them.

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed—he with his palm on the hip of the wife, and she with her palm on the hip of the husband,
The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,
The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,
And the mother sleeps, with her little child carefully wrapt.

The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,
The prisoner sleeps well in the prison—the run-away son sleeps;
The murderer that is to be hung next day—how does he sleep?
And the murder'd person—how does he sleep?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,
And the male that loves unrequited sleeps,

The head of the money-maker that plotted all day sleeps,
And the enraged and treacherous dispositions—all, all[1] sleep.

2

I stand in the dark with drooping eyes by the worst-suffering and the most restless,[2]
I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches from them,
The restless sink in their beds—they fitfully sleep.

Now I pierce the darkness—new beings appear,[3]
The earth recedes from me into the night,
I saw that it was beautiful, and I see that what is not the earth is beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside—I sleep close with the other sleepers, each in turn,
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other dreamers,
And I become the other dreamers.

3

I am a dance—Play up, there! the fit is whirling me fast!

I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,
I see the hiding of douceurs—I see nimble ghosts whichever way I look,
Cache, and cache again, deep in the ground and sea, and where it is neither ground or sea.

Well do they do their jobs, those journeymen divine,
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not if they could,
I reckon I am their boss, and they make me a pet besides,
And surround me and lead me, and run ahead when I walk,
To lift their cunning covers, to signify me with stretch'd arms, and resume the way;
Onward we move! a gay gang of blackguards! with mirth-shouting music, and wild-flapping pennants of joy!

[1] "all, all" added in 1860.
[2] 1855 '56 read "I stand with drooping eyes by the worst suffering and restless."
[3] Line 26 added in 1860.

4

I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician;
The emigrant and the exile, the criminal that stood in the box,
He who has been famous, and he who shall be famous after to-day,
The stammerer, the well-form'd person, the wasted or feeble person.

5

I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair expectantly,
My truant lover has come, and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me, darkness!
Receive me and my lover too—he will not let me go without him.

I roll myself upon you, as upon a bed—I resign myself to the dusk.

6

He whom I call answers me, and takes the place of my lover,
He rises with me silently from the bed.

Darkness! you are gentler than my lover—his flesh was sweaty and panting,
I feel the hot moisture yet that he left me.

My hands are spread forth, I pass them in all directions,
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are journeying.

Be careful, darkness! already, what was it touch'd me?
I thought my lover had gone, else darkness and he are one,
I hear the heart-beat—I follow, I fade away.

7

O hot-cheek'd and blushing! O foolish hectic!
O for pity's sake, no one must see me now! my clothes were stolen while I was abed,
Now I am thrust forth, where shall I run?

Pier that I saw dimly last night, when I look'd from the windows!

Pier out from the main, let me catch myself with you, and stay
—I will not chafe you,
I feel ashamed to go naked about the world.

I am curious to know where my feet stand—and what this is
flooding me, childhood or manhood—and the hunger
that crosses the bridge between.

8

The cloth laps a first sweet eating and drinking,
Laps life-swelling yolks—laps ear of rose-corn, milky and just
ripen'd;
The white teeth stay, and the boss-tooth advances in darkness,
And liquor is spill'd on lips and bosoms by touching glasses, and
the best liquor afterward.

9

I descend my western course, my sinews are flaccid,
Perfume and youth course through me, and I am their wake.

It is my face yellow and wrinkled, instead of the old woman's,
I sit low in a straw-bottom chair, and carefully darn my grand-
son's stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow, looking out on the winter mid-
night,
I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid earth.

A shroud I see, and I am the shroud—I wrap a body, and lie in
the coffin,
It is dark here under ground—it is not evil or pain here—it is
blank here, for reasons.

It seems to me that everything in the light and air ought to be
happy,
Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave, let him know
he has enough.

10

I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer, swimming naked through the
eddies of the sea,
His brown hair lies close and even to his head—he strikes out
with courageous arms—he urges himself with his legs,

I see his white body—I see his undaunted eyes,
I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him head-foremost on the rocks.

What are you doing, you ruffianly red-trickled waves?
Will you kill the courageous giant? Will you kill him in the prime of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles,
He is baffled, bang'd, bruis'd—he holds out while his strength holds out,
The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood—they bear him away—they roll him, swing him, turn him,
His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies, it is continually bruis'd on rocks,
Swiftly and out of sight is borne the brave corpse.

11

I turn, but do not extricate myself,
Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind—the wreck-guns sound,
The tempest lulls—the moon comes floundering through the drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on—I hear the burst as she strikes—I hear the howls of dismay—they grow fainter and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers,
I can but rush to the surf, and let it drench me and freeze upon me.

I search with the crowd—not one of the company is wash'd to us alive;
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them in rows in a barn.

12

Now of the older war-days, the defeat at Brooklyn,
Washington stands inside the lines—he stands on the intrench'd hills, amid a crowd of officers,

His face is cold and damp—he cannot repress the weeping drops,
He lifts the glass perpetually to his eyes—the color is blanch'd from his cheeks,
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided to him by their parents.

The same, at last and at last, when peace is declared,
He stands in the room of the old tavern—the well-belov'd soldiers all pass through,
The officers speechless and slow draw near in their turns,
The chief encircles their necks with his arm, and kisses them on the cheek,
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another—he shakes hands, and bids good-by to the army.

13

Now I tell what my mother told me to-day as we sat at dinner together,
Of when she was a nearly grown girl, living home with her parents on the old homestead.

A red squaw came one breakfast time to the old homestead,
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-bottoming chairs,
Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-envelop'd her face,
Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger,
She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face, and full and pliant limbs,
The more she look'd upon her, she loved her,
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace—she cook'd food for her,
She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle of the afternoon she went away,

O my mother was loth to have her go away !
All the week she thought of her—she watch'd for her many a month,
She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,
But the red squaw never came, nor was heard of there again.

14

Now Lucifer was not dead—or if he was, I am his sorrowful terrible heir ;
I have been wrong'd—I am oppress'd—I hate him that oppresses me,
I will either destroy him, or he shall release me.

Damn him ! how he does defile me !
How he informs against my brother and sister, and takes pay for their blood !
How he laughs when I look down the bend, after the steamboat that carries away my woman !

Now the vast dusk bulk that is the whale's bulk, it seems mine ;
Warily, sportsman ! though I lie so sleepy and sluggish, the tap of my flukes is death.[1]

15

A show of the summer softness ! a contact of something unseen ! an amour of the light and air !
I am jealous, and overwhelm'd with friendliness,
And will go gallivant with the light and air myself,
And have an unseen something to be in contact with them also.

O love and summer ! you are in the dreams, and in me !
Autumn and winter are in the dreams—the farmer goes with his thrift,
The droves and crops increase, and the barns are well-fill'd.

16

Elements merge in the night—ships make tacks in the dreams,
The sailor sails—the exile returns home,
The fugitive returns unharm'd—the immigrant is back beyond months and years,
The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his childhood, with the well-known neighbors and faces,

[1] 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "my tap is death."

They warmly welcome him—he is barefoot again, he forgets he is well off;
The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and Welshman voyage home, and the native of the Mediterranean voyages home,
To every port of England, France, Spain, enter well-fill'd ships,
The Swiss foots it toward his hills—the Prussian goes his way, the Hungarian his way, and the Pole his way,
The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.

17

The homeward bound, and the outward bound,
The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuyé, the onanist, the female that loves unrequited, the money-maker,
The actor and actress, those through with their parts, and those waiting to commence,
The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the nominee that is chosen, and the nominee that has fail'd,
The great already known, and the great any time after to-day,
The stammerer, the sick, the perfect-form'd, the homely,
The criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat and sentenced him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the audience,
The laugher and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow, the red squaw,
The consumptive, the erysipelite, the idiot, he that is wrong'd,
The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the dark,
I swear they are averaged now—one is no better than the other,
The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful;
Every one that sleeps is beautiful—everything in the dim light is beautiful,
The wildest and bloodiest is over, and all is peace.

18

Peace is always beautiful,
The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

The myth of heaven indicates the Soul;
The Soul is always beautiful—it appears more or it appears less —it comes, or it lags behind,

It comes from its embower'd garden, and looks pleasantly on itself, and encloses the world,
Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and perfect and clean the womb cohering,
The head well-grown, proportion'd and plumb, and the bowels and joints proportion'd and plumb.

19

The Soul is always beautiful,
The universe is duly in order, everything is in its place,
What has arrived is in its place, and what waits is in its place;
The twisted skull waits, the watery or rotten blood waits,
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the child of the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard himself waits long,
The sleepers that lived and died wait—the far advanced are to go on in their turns, and the far behind are to come[1] on in their turns,
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow and unite —they unite now.

20

The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth, from east to west, as they lie unclothed,
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand—the European and American are hand in hand,
Learn'd and unlearn'd are hand in hand, and male and female are hand in hand,
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her lover—they press close without lust—his lips press her neck,
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms with measureless love, and the son holds the father in his arms with measureless love,
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist of the daughter,
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man, friend is inarm'd by friend,
The scholar kisses the teacher, and the teacher kisses the scholar —the wrong'd is made right,
The call of the slave is one with the master's call, and the master salutes the slave,

[1] 1855 '56 '60. For "come on" read "go on."

The felon steps forth from the prison—the insane becomes sane
—the suffering of sick persons is reliev'd,
The sweatings and fevers stop—the throat that was unsound is sound—the lungs of the consumptive are resumed—the poor distress'd head is free,
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever, and smoother than ever,
Stiflings and passages open—the paralyzed become supple,
The swell'd and convuls'd and congested awake to themselves in condition,
They pass the invigoration of the night, and the chemistry of the night, and awake.

21

I too pass from the night,
I stay a while away, O night, but I return to you again, and love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
I am not afraid—I have been well brought forward by you; 200
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I lay so long,
I know not how I came of you, and I know not where I go with you—but I know I came well, and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes;
I will duly pass the day, O my mother, and duly return to you.[1]

CAROL OF WORDS.

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of The Sayers of the Words of The Earth." In editions of 1860 '67 under title of "To The Sayers of Words."

1

EARTH, round, rolling, compact—suns, moons, animals—all these are words to be said;[2]
Watery, vegetable, sauroid advances—beings, premonitions, lispings of the future,
Behold! these are vast words to be said.[3]

[1] 1855 adds "Not you will yield forth the dawn again more surely than you will yield forth me again,
Not the womb yields the babe in its time more surely than I shall be yielded from you in my time."

[2] "to be said" added in 1860.

[3] 1856 reads "These are vast words."

Were you thinking that those were the words—those upright lines? those curves, angles, dots?
No, those are not the words—the substantial words are in the ground and sea,
They are in the air—they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words—those delicious sounds out of your friends' mouths?
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words;
In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's, well-shaped, natural, gay,
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need of shame.

2

Air, soil, water, fire—these are words;
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate with theirs—my name is nothing to them;
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are words, sayings, meanings;
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and women, are sayings and meanings also.

3

The workmanship of souls is by the inaudible words of the earth;
The great masters[1] know the earth's words, and use them more than the audible words.[2]

Amelioration is one of the earth's words;
The earth neither lags nor hastens;
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the jump;
It is not half beautiful only—defects and excrescences show just as much as perfections show.

[1] 1856 '60 read "The great masters, the sayers," etc.
[2] After line 18, 1856 reads "Syllables are not the earth's words,
Beauty, reality, manhood, time, life,—the realities of such as these are the earth's words."

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough;
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd either;
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print;
They are imbued through all things, conveying themselves willingly,
Conveying a sentiment and invitation of the earth—I utter and utter,
I speak not, yet if you hear me not, of what avail am I to you?
To bear—to better—lacking these, of what avail am I?

4

Accouche! Accouchez!
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?
Will you squat and stifle there?

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

5

The earth does not exhibit itself, nor refuse to exhibit itself—possesses still underneath;
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of heroes, the wail of slaves,
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of young people, accents of bargainers,
Underneath these, possessing the words that never fail.

To her children, the words of the eloquent dumb great mother never fail;
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail, and reflection does not fail;
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue does not fail.

6

Of the interminable sisters,
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and younger sisters,
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,
With the fascinations of youth, and the equal fascinations of age,
Sits she whom I too love like the rest—sits undisturb'd,
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while her eyes glance back from it,[1]
Glance as she sits,[2] inviting none, denying none,
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

7

Seen at hand, or seen at a distance,
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,
Duly approach and pass with their companions, or a companion,
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the countenances of those who are with them,
From the countenances of children or women, or the manly countenance,
From the open countenances of animals, or from inanimate things,
From the landscape or waters, or from the exquisite apparition of the sky,
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning them,
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice with the same companions.

8

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as they.

9

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing, carrying,
The Soul's realization and determination still inheriting,
The fluid[3] vacuum around and ahead still entering and dividing,

[1] 1856 reads "her eyes glancing back from it."
[2] 1856 reads "Glancing thence as she sits."
[3] 1856. For "fluid" reads "liquid."

No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

10

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you;
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

11

Each man to himself, and each woman to herself, such[1] is the word of the past and present, and the word of immortality;
No[2] one can acquire for another—not one!
Not one can grow for another—not one!

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him;
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him;
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him;
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him;
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him;
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it cannot fail;
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress, not to the audience;
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his own, or the indication of his own.

12

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be complete!
I swear the earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains jagged and broken!

[1] "such" added in 1867.
[2] 1856. For "No" reads "Not."

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth !
I swear there can be no theory of any account, unless it corroborate the theory of the earth !
No politics, art, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth.

13

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that which responds love !
It is that which contains itself—which never invites, and never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words !
I swear I think all merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth !
Toward him who sings the songs of the Body, and of the truths of the earth ;
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of[1] words that print cannot touch.

14

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best ;
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best, I find I cannot,
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow—all or any is best ;
It is not what you anticipated—it is cheaper, easier, nearer ;
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before ;
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before ;
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as before ;
But the Soul is also real,—it too is positive and direct ;
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

[1] 1856 '60 read "of the words."

15

This is a poem—a carol of words[1]—these are hints of meanings.
These are to echo[2] the tones of Souls, and the phrases of Souls;
If they did not echo the phrases of Souls, what were they then?
If they had not reference to you in especial, what were they then?

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that tells the best!
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

16

Say on, sayers![3]
Delve! mould! pile the[4] words of the earth!
Work on—(it is materials you must bring, not breaths;)[5]
Work on, age after age! nothing is to be lost;
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use;
When the materials are all prepared, the architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail! I announce them and lead them;
I swear to you they will understand you, and justify you;
I swear to you the greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and encloses all, and is faithful to all;
I swear to you, he and the rest shall not forget you—they shall perceive that you are not an iota less than they;
I swear to you, you shall be glorified in them.

AH POVERTIES, WINCINGS, AND SULKY RETREATS.

First published in "When Lilacs Last In The Door-yard Bloomed," 1865 '66.

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats!
Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me!
(For what is my life, or any man's life, but a conflict with foes—the old, the incessant war?)

[1] For "a carol of words" 1856 reads "for the sayers of the earth." 1860 '67 read "for the sayers of words."
[2] 1856 '60 '67 read "These are they that echo."
[3] 1856 reads "Say on Sayers of the earth!"
[4] 1856 reads "substantial words," etc.
[5] Line 126 added in 1860.

You degradations—you tussle with passions and appetites ;
You smarts from dissatisfied friendships, (ah wounds, the sharpest of all ;)
You toil of painful and choked articulations—you meannesses ;
You shallow tongue-talks at tables, (my tongue the shallowest of any ;)
You broken resolutions, you racking angers, you smother'd ennuis ;
Ah, think not you finally triumph—My real self has yet to come forth ;
It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies beneath me ;
It shall yet stand up the soldier of unquestion'd victory.

A BOSTON BALLAD.

(1854.)

First published in 1855. In edition of 1856 under title of "Poem of Apparitions in Boston, the 78th Year of These States." In 1860 under title of "A Boston Ballad the 78th Year of These States."

To get betimes in Boston town, I rose this morning early ;[1]
Here's a good place at the corner—I must stand and see the show.

Clear the way there, Jonathan ![2]
Way for the President's marshal ! Way for the government cannon !
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons—and the apparitions copiously tumbling.[3]

I love to look on the stars and stripes—I hope the fifes will play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops ![4]
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through Boston town.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 read "I rose this morning early to get betimes in Boston town."
[2] In 1855 '56 '60 lines 3, 4 and 5 begin the poem, lines 1 and 2 following.
[3] 1855 reads "and the phantoms afterward" for "and the apparitions," etc.
[4] 1855 reads "How bright shine the foremost with cutlasses."

A fog follows—antiques of the same come limping,
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear bandaged and bloodless.

Why this is indeed[1] a show! It has called the dead out of the earth!
The old grave yards of the hills have hurried to see!
Phantoms! phantoms countless by flank and rear![2]
Cock'd hats of mothy mould! crutches made of mist!
Arms in slings! old men leaning on young men's shoulders!

What troubles you, Yankee phantoms? What is all this chattering of bare gums?
Does the ague convulse your limbs? Do you mistake your crutches for fire-locks, and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears, you will not see the President's marshal;
If you groan such groans, you might balk the government cannon.

For shame, old maniacs! Bring down those toss'd arms, and let your white hair be;
Here gape your great[3] grand-sons—their wives gaze at them from the windows,
See how well dress'd—see how orderly they conduct themselves.

Worse and worse! Can't you stand it? Are you retreating?
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then! Pell-mell![4]
To your graves! Back! back[5] to the hills, old limpers!
I do not think you belong here, anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you what it is, gentlemen of Boston?

[1] "indeed" added in 1867.
[2] 1855 '56 '60 read "and rear of it."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "smart grand-sons."
[4] 1855 '56 read "Retreat then! Pell-mell! Back to the hills, old limpers!"
[5] 1860 reads "Back to your graves! Back to the hills," etc.

I will whisper it to the Mayor—he shall send a committee to England ;
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a cart to the royal vault—haste ![1]

Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the grave-clothes, box up his bones for a journey ;
Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you, black-bellied clipper,
Up with your anchor ! shake out your sails ! steer straight toward Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out the government cannon,
Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another procession, guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them :[2]
Look ! all orderly citizens—look from the windows, women !

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue those that will not stay,
Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top of the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster ! The crown is come to its own, and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a made man from this day ;
You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

YEAR OF METEORS.

(1859–60.)

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

Year of meteors ! brooding year !
I would bind in words retrospective, some of your deeds and signs ;
I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad ;

[1] "haste" added in 1860.
[2] 1855 reads "Here is a centre-piece for them."

I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted the scaffold in Virginia;
(I was at hand—silent I stood, with teeth shut close—I watch'd;
I stood very near you, old man, when cool and indifferent, but trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds, you mounted the scaffold;)
—I would sing in my copious song your census returns of The States,
The tables of population and products—I would sing of your ships and their cargoes,
The proud black ships of Manhattan, arriving, some fill'd with immigrants, some from the isthmus with cargoes of gold;
Songs thereof would I sing—to all that hitherward comes would I welcome give;
And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from me, sweet boy of England!
Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds, as you pass'd with your cortege of nobles?
There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with attachment;
I know not why, but I loved you . . . (and so go forth little song,
Far over sea speed like an arrow, carrying my love all folded,
And find in his palace the youth I love, and drop these lines at his feet;)
—Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam up my bay,
Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up my bay, she was 600 feet long,
Her, moving swiftly, surrounded by myriads of small craft, I forget not to sing;
—Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north, flaring in heaven;
Nor the strange huge meteor procession, dazzling and clear, shooting over our heads,
(A moment, a moment long, it sail'd its balls of unearthly light over our heads,
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone;)
—Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them would I gleam and patch these chants;
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good! year of forebodings! year of the youth I love!

Year of comets and meteors transient and strange!—lo! even here, one equally transient and strange!
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what is this book,
What am I myself but one of your meteors?

A BROADWAY PAGEANT.

Reception Japanese Embassy, June, 1860.

First published in "Drum Taps," 1865.

1

Over the western sea, hither from Niphon come,[1]
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad!
I do not know whether others behold what I behold,
In the procession, along with the nobles[2] of Asia, the errand-bearers,
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the ranks marching;
But I will sing you a song of what I behold, Libertad.

2

When million-footed Manhattan, unpent, descends to her[3] pavements;
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud roar I love;

[1] Drum Taps reads "Over sea, hither from Niphon,
Courteous, the Princes of Asia, swart-cheek'd princes,
First-comers, guests, two-sworded princes,
Lesson-giving princes, leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,
This day they ride through Manhattan."

[2] Drum Taps. For "Nobles" reads "Princes."

[3] Drum Taps. For "her" reads "its."

When the round-mouth'd guns, out of the smoke and smell I love, spit their salutes;
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me—when heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze;
When, gorgeous, the countless straight stems, the forests at the wharves, thicken with colors;
When every ship, richly drest, carries her flag at the peak;
When pennants trail, and street-festoons hang from the windows;
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and foot-standers—when the mass is densest;
When the façades of the houses are alive with people—when eyes gaze, riveted, tens of thousands at a time;
When the guests from the islands advance—when the pageant moves forward, visible;
When the summons is made—when the answer that waited thousands of years, answers;
I too, arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the crowd, and gaze with them.

3

Superb-faced Manhattan!
Comrade Americanos!—to us, then, at last, the Orient comes.

To us, my city,
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on opposite sides—to walk in the space between,
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,[1]
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld,
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,
The race of Brahma comes!

4

See, my cantabile! these, and more, are flashing to us from the procession;
As it moves, changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves, changing, before us.

[1] Drum Taps. After line 27 reads "The land of Paradise—land of Caucasus—the nest of birth."

For not the envoys, nor the tann'd Japanee from his island[1] only;
Lithe and silent, the Hindoo appears—the Asiatic continent[2] itself appears—the Past, the dead,
The murky night morning of wonder and fable, inscrutable,
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,
The North—the sweltering South—eastern[3] Assyria—the Hebrews—the Ancient of Ancients,
Vast desolated cities—the gliding Present—all of these, and more, are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it;
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast beyond;
The coast you, henceforth, are facing—you Libertad! from your Western golden shores
The countries there, with their populations—the millions en-masse, are curiously here;
The swarming market places—the temples, with idols ranged along the sides, or at the end—bonze, brahmin, and lama;
The mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman;
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl—the ecstatic person[4]—the secluded Emperors,
Confucius himself—the great poets and heroes—the warriors, the castes, all,
Trooping up, crowding from all directions—from the Altay mountains,
From Thibet—from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of China,
From the Southern peninsulas, and the demi-continental islands—from Malaysia;
These, and whatever belongs to them, palpable, show forth to me, and are seiz'd by me,
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,
Till, as here, them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for you.

[1] "from his island" added in 1870.
[2] 1870 reads "the whole Asiatic continent," etc.
[3] "eastern" added in 1870.
[4] Drum Taps reads "the ecstatic person—the divine Buddha," etc.

5

For I too, raising my voice, join the ranks of this pageant;
I am the chanter—I chant aloud over the pageant;
I chant the world on my Western Sea;
I chant, copious, the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky;
I chant the new empire, grander than any before—As in a vision it comes to me;
I chant America, the Mistress—I chant a greater supremacy;
I chant, projected, a thousand blooming cities yet, in time, on those groups of sea-islands;
I chant my sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes;
I chant my stars and stripes fluttering in the wind;
I chant commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work—races, reborn, refresh'd;
Lives, works, resumed—The object I know not—but the old, the Asiatic, renew'd,[1] as it must be,
Commencing from this day, surrounded by the world.

6

And you, Libertad of the world!
You shall sit in the middle, well-pois'd, thousands of years;
As to-day, from one side, the nobles[2] of Asia come to you;
As to-morrow, from the other side, the Queen of England sends her eldest son to you.

7

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,
The ring is circled, the journey is done;
The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd—nevertheless the perfume pours copiously out of the whole box.

8

Young Libertad!
With the venerable Asia, the all-mother,
Be considerate with her, now and ever, hot Libertad—for you are all;

[1] Drum Taps. For "renew'd" reads "resumed."
[2] Drum Taps. For "nobles" reads "princes."

Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother, now sending messages over the archipelagoes to you;
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

9

Were the children straying westward so long? so wide the tramping?
Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from Paradise so long?
Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified—they are accomplish'd—they shall now be turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you thence;
They shall now also march obediently eastward, for your sake, Libertad.

THOUGHT.

First published in 1867.

Of persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies, wealth, scholarships, and the like;
To me, all that those persons have arrived at, sinks away from them, except as it results to their Bodies and Souls,
So that often to me they appear gaunt and naked;
And often, to me, each one mocks the others, and mocks himself or herself,
And of each one, the core of life, namely happiness, is full of the rotten excrement of maggots,
And often, to me, those men and women pass unwittingly the true realities of life, and go toward false realities,
And often, to me, they are alive after what custom has served them, but nothing more,
And often, to me, they are sad, hasty, unwaked sonnambules, walking the dusk.

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH.

First published in 1855. In edition of 1856 under title of "Poem of the Child That Went Forth, and Always Goes Forth, Forever and Forever."

There was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he look'd upon,[1] that object he became;

[1] 1855 '56 '60. After "look'd upon" read "and received with wonder, pity, love, or dread," etc.

And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years, or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song of the phœbe-bird,
And the Third-month[1] lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal, and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barn-yard, or by the mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there—and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads—all became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month[2] and Fifth-month became part of him;
Winter-grain sprouts, and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road;
And the old drunkard staggering home from the out-house of the tavern, whence he had lately risen,
And the school-mistress that pass'd on her way to the school,
And the friendly boys that pass'd—and the quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls—and the barefoot negro boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country, wherever he went.

His own parents,
He that had father'd him, and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb, and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that;
They gave him afterward every day—they became part of him.[3]

The mother at home, quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table;

[1] 1855 '56. For "Third-month" read "March born."
[2] 1855 '56. For "Fourth month and Fifth-month" read "April and May."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "they and of them became part of him."

The mother with mild words—clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by;
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust;
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture—the yearning and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd—the sense of what is real—the thought if, after all, it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time—the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets—if they are not flashes and specks, what are they?
The streets themselves, and the façades of houses, and goods in the windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd[1] wharves—the huge crossing at the ferries,
The village on the highland, seen from afar at sunset—the river between,
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown, three miles off,
The schooner near by, sleepily dropping down the tide—the little boat slack-tow'd astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint, away solitary by itself—the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud;
These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.[2]

LONGINGS FOR HOME.

First published in 1860.

O MAGNET-SOUTH! O glistening, perfumed South! My South!
O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse, and love! Good and evil!
O all dear to me!

[1] 1855 '56. For "heavy-plank'd" read "tiered."
[2] 1855 '56 add "And these become part of him or her peruses them now." 1860 reads "And these become part of him or her peruses them here."

O dear to me my birth-things—All moving things, and the trees where I was born—the grains, plants, rivers;
Dear to me my own slow sluggish rivers where they flow, distant, over flats of silvery sands, or through swamps;
Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, the Altamahaw, the Pedee, the Tombigbee, the Santee, the Coosa, and the Sabine;
O pensive, far away wandering, I return with my Soul to haunt their banks again;
Again in Florida I float on transparent lakes—I float on the Okeechobee—I cross the hummock land, or through pleasant openings, or dense forests;
I see the parrots in the woods—I see the papaw tree and the blossoming titi;
Again, sailing in my coaster, on deck, I coast off Georgia—I coast up the Carolinas,
I see where the live-oak is growing—I see where the yellow-pine, the scented bay-tree, the lemon and orange, the cypress, the graceful palmetto;
I pass rude sea-headlands and enter Pamlico Sound through an inlet, and dart my vision inland;
O the cotton plant! the growing fields of rice, sugar, hemp!
The cactus, guarded with thorns—the laurel-tree, with large white flowers;
The range afar—the richness and barrenness—the old woods charged with mistletoe and trailing moss,
The piney odor and the gloom—the awful natural stillness, (Here in these dense swamps the freebooter carries his gun, and the fugitive slave has his conceal'd hut;)
O the strange fascination of these half-known, half-impassable swamps, infested by reptiles, resounding with the bellow of the alligator, the sad noises of the night-owl and the wild-cat, and the whirr of the rattlesnake;
The mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing all the forenoon —singing through the moon-lit night,
The humming-bird, the wild turkey, the raccoon, the opossum;
A Tennessee corn-field—the tall, graceful, long-leav'd corn—slender, flapping, bright green with tassels—with beautiful ears, each well-sheath'd in its husk;
An Arkansas prairie—a sleeping lake, or still bayou;
O my heart! O tender and fierce pangs—I can stand them not —I will depart;
O to be a Virginian, where I grew up! O to be a Carolinian!

O longings irrepressible! O I will go back to old Tennessee, and never wander more!

YOU FELONS ON TRIAL IN COURTS.

First published in 1860. See "O Bitter Sprig! Confession Sprig!" page 468.

You felons on trial in courts;
You convicts in prison-cells—you sentenced assassins, chain'd and hand-cuff'd with iron;
Who am I, too,[1] that I am not on trial, or in prison?
Me, ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are not chain'd with iron, or my ankles with iron?

You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs, or obscene in your rooms,
Who am I, that I should call you more obscene than myself?

O culpable![2]
I acknowledge—I exposé!
(O admirers! praise not me! compliment not me! you make me wince,
I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)

Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked;
Beneath this face that appears so impassive, hell's tides continually run;
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me;
I walk with delinquents with passionate love;
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and prostitutes myself,
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny myself?

TO A COMMON PROSTITUTE.

First published in 1860.

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature;
Not till the sun excludes you, do I exclude you;

[1] "too" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 '67 read "O culpable! O traitor!"

Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you, and the leaves to rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle for you.

My girl, I appoint with you an appointment—and I charge you that you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come.

Till then, I salute you with a significant look, that you do not forget me.

I WAS LOOKING A LONG WHILE.

First published in 1860.

I WAS looking a long while for a clue to[1] the history of the past for myself, and for these chants—and now I have found it;
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I neither accept nor reject;)
It is no more in the legends than in all else;
It is in the present—it is this earth to-day;
It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past;)[2]
It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the average man of to-day;
It is in[3] languages, social customs, literatures, arts;
It is in[4] the broad show of artificial things, ships, machinery, politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the interchange of nations,
All for the average man of to-day.

TO A PRESIDENT.

First published in 1860.

ALL you are doing and saying is to America dangled mirages,
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature, you have not learn'd the great amplitude, rectitude, impartiality;

[1] "a clue to" added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 read "It is in Democracy, in this America, the old world also."
[3] "in" added in 1870.
[4] "in" added in 1870.

You have not seen that only such as they are for These States,
And that what is less than they, must sooner or later lift off
from These States.

TO THE STATES.

To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad.

First published in 1860.

Why reclining, interrogating? Why myself and all drowsing?
What deepening twilight! scum floating atop of the waters!
Who are they, as bats and night-dogs, askant in the Capitol?
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O south, your torrid suns! O
north, your arctic freezings!)
Are those really Congressmen? are those the great Judges? is
that the President?
Then I will sleep awhile yet—for I see that These States sleep,
for reasons;
(With gathering murk—with muttering thunder and lambent
shoots, we all duly awake,
South, north, east, west, inland and seaboard, we will surely
awake.)

DRUM-TAPS.

First published in 1870.

Aroused and angry,
I thought to beat the alarum, and urge relentless war;
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd, and I resign'd
myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead.

DRUM-TAPS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

I

First, O songs, for a prelude,
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum, pride and joy in my
city,

Born May 31 1879

Dave I send a couple copies
of my phiz one for the children each
(if I knew their first names I'd
have written on) W W

Have just had my breakfast – hot
buckwheat cakes with syrup & a
cup of tea – Merry Christmas
to you & all
Walt Whitman

How she led the rest to arms—how she gave the cue,
How at once with lithe limbs, unwaiting a moment, she sprang;
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)
How you sprang! how you threw off the costumes of peace with indifferent hand;
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife were heard in their stead;
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude, songs of soldiers,)
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

2

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading;
Forty years as a pageant—till unawares, the Lady of this teeming and turbulent city,
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable wealth,
With her million children around her—suddenly,
At dead of night, at news from the south,
Incens'd, struck with clench'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric—the night sustain'd it;
Till with ominous hum, our hive at day-break pour'd out its myriads.

From the houses then, and the workshops, and through all the doorways,
Leapt they tumultuous—and lo! Manhattan arming.

3

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming;
The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the blacksmith's hammer, tost aside with precipitation;)
The lawyer leaving his office, and arming—the judge leaving the court;
The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down, throwing the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs;
The salesman leaving the store—the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving;

Squads gather[1] everywhere by common consent, and arm ;[2]
The new recruits, even boys—the old men show them how to wear their accoutrements—they buckle the straps carefully ;
Outdoors arming—indoors arming—the flash of the musket-barrels ;
The white tents cluster in camps—the arm'd sentries around—the sunrise cannon, and again at sunset ;
Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark from the wharves ;
(How good they look, as they tramp down to the river, sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders !
How I love them ! how I could hug them, with their brown faces, and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with dust !)
The blood of the city up—arm'd ! arm'd ! the cry everywhere ;
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches, and from all the public buildings and stores ;
The tearful parting—the mother kisses her son—the son kisses his mother ;
(Loth is the mother to part—yet not a word does she speak to detain him ;)
The tumultuous escort—the ranks of policemen preceding, clearing the way ;
The unpent enthusiasm—the wild cheers of the crowd for their favorites ;
The artillery—the silent cannons, bright as gold, drawn along, rumble lightly over the stones ;
(Silent cannons—soon to cease your silence !
Soon, unlimber'd, to begin the red business ;)
All the mutter of preparation—all the determin'd arming ;
The hospital service—the lint, bandages, and medicines ;
The women volunteering for nurses—the work begun for, in earnest—no mere parade now ;
War ! an arm'd race is advancing !—the welcome for battle—no turning away ;
War ! be it weeks, months, or years—an arm'd race is advancing to welcome it.

4

Mannahatta a-march !—and it's O to sing it well !
It's O for a manly life in the camp !

[1] Drum-Taps for "gather" reads "gathering."
[2] Drum-Taps for "arm" reads "arming."

And the sturdy artillery!
The guns, bright as gold—the work for giants—to serve well the guns:
Unlimber them! no more, as the past forty years, for salutes for courtesies merely;
Put in something else now besides powder and wadding.

5

And you, Lady of Ships! you Mannahatta!
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city!
Often in peace and wealth you were pensive, or covertly frown'd amid all your children;
But now you smile with joy, exulting old Mannahatta!

1861.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Arm'd year! year of the struggle!
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you, terrible year!
Not you as some pale poetling, seated at a desk, lisping cadenzas piano;
But as a strong man, erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle on your shoulder,
With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands—with a knife in the belt at your side,
As I heard you shouting loud—your sonorous voice ringing across the continent;
Your masculine voice, O year, as rising amid the great cities,
Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you, as one of the workmen, the dwellers in Manhattan;
Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of Illinois and Indiana,
Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait, and descending the Alleghanies;
Or down from the great lakes, or in Pennsylvania, or on deck along the Ohio river;
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers, or at Chattanooga on the mountain top,
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs, clothed in blue, bearing weapons, robust year;

Heard your determin'd voice, launch'd forth again and again ;
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the round-lipp'd cannon,
I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

1

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows — through doors — burst like a ruthless force,[1]
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation ;
Into the school where the scholar is studying ;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride ;
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, plowing his field or gathering his grain ;
So fierce you whirr and pound, you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

2

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets :
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? No sleepers must sleep in those beds ;
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—Would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

3

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation ;
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer ;
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man ;
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties ;

[1] Drum-Taps reads "burst like a force of ruthless men."

Make even the trestles to shake the dead, where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE A BIRD.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

From Paumanock starting, I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar, to sing the idea of all;
To the north betaking myself, to sing there arctic songs,
To Kanada, till I absorb Kanada in myself—to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they are inimitable;)
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs—to Missouri and Kansas and Arkansas, to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky—to the Carolinas and Georgia, to sing theirs,
To Texas, and so along up toward California, to roam accepted everywhere;
To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum, if need be,)
The idea of all—of the western world, one and inseparable.
And then the song of each member of These States.

RISE, O DAYS, FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

I

Rise, O days, from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier, fiercer sweep!
Long for my soul, hungering gymnastic, I devour'd what the earth gave me;
Long I roam'd the woods of the north—long I watch'd Niagara pouring;
I travel'd the prairies over, and slept on their breast—I cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus;
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd out to sea;
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm;
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves;
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high, curling over;

I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds;
Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb! O wild as my heart, and powerful!)
Heard the continuous thunder, as it bellow'd after the lightning;
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning, as sudden and fast amid the din they chased each other across the sky;
—These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder, yet pensive and masterful;
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me;
Yet there with my soul I fed—I fed content, supercilious.

2

'Twas well, O soul! 'twas a good preparation you gave me!
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill;
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never gave us;
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the mightier cities;
Something for us is pouring now, more than Niagara pouring;
Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest, are you indeed inexhaustible?)
What, to pavements and homesteads here—what were those storms of the mountains and sea?
What, to passions I witness around me to-day? Was the sea risen?
Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black clouds?
Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something more deadly and savage;
Manhattan, rising, advancing with menacing front—Cincinnati, Chicago, unchain'd;
—What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold what comes here!
How it climbs with daring feet and hands! how it dashes!
How the true thunder bellows after the lightning! how bright the flashes of lightning!
How DEMOCRACY, with desperate vengeful port strides on, shown through the dark by those flashes of lightning!
(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard through the dark,
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with vengeful stroke!
And do you rise higher than ever yet, O days, O cities!
Crash heavier, heavier yet, O storms! you have done me good;
My soul, prepared in the mountains, absorbs your immortal strong nutriment;
—Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads, through farms, only half-satisfied;
One doubt, nauseous, undulating like a snake, crawl'd on the ground before me,
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft, ironically hissing low;
—The cities I loved so well, I abandon'd and left—I sped to the certainties suitable to me;
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies, and Nature's dauntlessness,
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only;
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water and air I waited long;
—But now I no longer wait—I am fully satisfied—I am glutted;
I have witness'd the true lightning—I have witness'd my cities electric;
I have lived to behold man burst forth, and warlike America rise;
Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary wilds,
No more on the mountains roam, or sail the stormy sea.

CITY OF SHIPS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

City of ships!
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful, sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)
City of the world! (for all races are here;
All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling in and out, with eddies and foam!
City of wharves and stores! city of tall façades of marble and iron!

Proud and passionate city! mettlesome, mad, extravagant city!
Spring up, O city! not for peace alone, but be indeed yourself, warlike!
Fear not! submit to no models but your own, O city!
Behold me! incarnate me, as I have incarnated you!
I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted, I have adopted;
Good or bad, I never question you—I love all—I do not condemn anything;
I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more;
In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine;
War, red war, is my song through your streets, O city!

THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY.

VOLUNTEER OF 1861-2.

(At Washington Park, Brooklyn, assisting the Centenarian.)

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

GIVE me your hand, old Revolutionary;
The hill-top is nigh—but a few steps, (make room, gentlemen;)
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your hundred and extra years;
You can walk, old man, though your eyes are almost done;
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means;
On the plain below, recruits are drilling and exercising;
There is the camp—one regiment departs to-morrow;
Do you hear the officers giving the orders?
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?

Why, what comes over you now, old man?
Why do you tremble, and clutch my hand so convulsively?
The troops are but drilling—they are yet surrounded with smiles;
Around them, at hand, the well-drest friends, and the women;
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down;
Green the midsummer verdure, and fresh blows the dallying breeze,
O'er proud and peaceful cities, and arm of the sea between.

But drill and parade are over—they march back to quarters;
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what a clapping!

As wending, the crowds now part and disperse—but we, old man,
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must remain;
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

THE CENTENARIAN.

When I clutch'd your hand, it was not with terror;
But suddenly, pouring about me here, on every side,
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the slopes they ran,
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see, south and south-east and south-west,
Over hills, across lowlands, and in the skirts of woods,
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over), came again, and suddenly raged,
As eighty-five years agone, no mere parade receiv'd with applause of friends,
But a battle, which I took part in myself—aye, long ago as it is, I took part in it,
Walking then this hill-top, this same ground.

Aye, this is the ground;
My blind eyes, even as I speak, behold it re-peopled from graves;
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear;
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted;
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to bay;
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes:
Here we lay encamp'd—it was this time in summer also.

As I talk, I remember all—I remember the Declaration;
It was read here—the whole army paraded—it was read to us here;
By his staff surrounded, the General stood in the middle—he held up his unsheath'd sword,
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then;
The English war-ships had just arrived—the king had sent them from over the sea;

We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at anchor,
And the transports, swarming with soldiers.

A few days more, and they landed—and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,
A veteran force, furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle;
But one brigade, early in the forenoon, order'd forward to engage the red-coats;
Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,
And how long and how well it stood, confronting death.

Who do you think that was, marching steadily, sternly confronting death?
It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong,
Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and many of them known personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward Gowanus' waters;
Till of a sudden, unlook'd for, by defiles through the woods, gain'd at night,
The British advancing, wedging in from the east, fiercely playing their guns,
That brigade of the youngest was cut off, and at the enemy's mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill;
They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their environment;
Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying in the middle;
But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and thinning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the General;
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British maneuver'd to draw us out for a pitch'd battle;
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments;
Sallying forth, we fought at several points—but in each the luck was against us;
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd us back to the works on this hill;
Till we turn'd, menacing, here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong;
Few return'd—nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

That, and here, my General's first battle;
No women looking on, nor sunshine to bask in—it did not conclude with applause;
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness, in mist, on the ground, under a chill rain,
Wearied that night we lay, foil'd and sullen;
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord, off against us encamp'd,
Quite within hearing, feasting, klinking wine-glasses together over their victory.

So, dull and damp, and another day;
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,
Silent as a ghost, while they thought they were sure of him, my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,
Down by the ferry, lit by torches, hastening the embarcation;
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were all pass'd over;
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on him for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom;
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,
As he stood in his boat, and look'd toward the coming sun,
I saw something different from capitulation.

TERMINUS.

Enough—the Centenarian's story ends ;
The two, the past and present, have interchanged ;
I myself, as connecter, as chansonnier of a great future, am now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod ?
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the waters he cross'd,
As resolute in defeat, as other generals in their proudest triumphs ?

It is well—a lesson like that, always comes good ;
I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward ;
I must preserve that look, as it beam'd on you, rivers of Brooklyn.

See ! as the annual round returns, the phantoms return ;
It is the 27th of August, and the British have landed ;
The battle begins, and goes against us—behold ! through the smoke, Washington's face ;
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth to intercept the enemy ;
They are cut off—murderous artillery from the hills plays upon them ;
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops the flag,
Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds,
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn ! I perceive you are more valuable than your owners supposed ;
Ah, river ! henceforth you will be illumin'd to me at sunrise with something besides the sun.

Encampments new ! in the midst of you stands an encampment very old ;
Stands forever the camp of the dead brigade.

AN ARMY CORPS ON THE MARCH.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloomed," 1865-6.

WITH its cloud of skirmishers in advance,
With now the sound of a single shot, snapping like a whip, and now an irregular volley,

The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense brigades press on ;
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the dust-cover'd men,
In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the ground,
With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rumble, the horses sweat,
As the army corps[1] advances.

CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

A LINE in long array, where they wind betwixt green islands ;
They take a serpentine course—their arms flash in the sun—Hark to the musical clank ;
Behold the silvery river—in it the splashing horses, loitering, stop to drink ;
Behold the brown-faced men—each group, each person, a picture—the negligent rest on the saddles ;
Some emerge on the opposite bank—others are just entering the ford—while,
Scarlet, and blue, and snowy white,[2]
The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind.

BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

I SEE before me now, a traveling army halting ;
Below, a fertile valley spread, with barns, and the orchards of summer ;
Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt in places, rising high ;
Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall shapes, dingily seen ;
The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some away up on the mountain ;
The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized, flickering ;
And over all, the sky—the sky ! far, far out of reach, studded, breaking out, the eternal stars.

[1] Lilacs. For "corps" reads "resistless."
[2] Line 6 added in 1870.

BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow;—but first I note,
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim outline,
The darkness, lit by spots of kindled fire—the silence;
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving;
The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be stealthily watching me;)
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous thoughts,
Of life and death—of home and the past and loved, and of those that are far away;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS, FATHER.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

1

Come up from the fields, father, here's a letter from our Pete;
And come to the front door, mother—here's a letter from thy dear son.

2

Lo, 'tis autumn;
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages, with leaves fluttering in the moderate wind;
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang, and grapes on the trellis'd vines;
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?
Smell you the buckwheat, where the bees were lately buzzing?)

Above all, lo, the sky, so calm, so transparent after the rain, and with wondrous clouds;
Below, too, all calm, all vital and beautiful—and the farm prospers well.

3

Down in the fields all prospers well;
But now from the fields come, father—come at the daughter's call;
And come to the entry, mother—to the front door come, right away.

Fast as she can she hurries—something ominous—her steps trembling;
She does not tarry to smoothe her hair, nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly;
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd;
O a strange hand writes for our dear son—O stricken mother's soul!
All swims before her eyes—flashes with black—she catches the main words only;
Sentences broken—*gun-shot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,*
At present low, but will soon be better.

4

Ah, now, the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio, with all its cities and farms,
Sickly white in the face, and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.

Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks through her sobs;
The little sisters huddle around, speechless and dismay'd;)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.

5

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to be better, that brave and simple soul;)
While they stand at home at the door, he is dead already;
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better;
She, with thin form, presently drest in black;
By day her meals untouch'd—then at night fitfully sleeping, often waking,

In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed—silent from life, escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night:
When you, my son and my comrade, dropt at my side that day,
One look I but gave, which your dear eyes return'd, with a look I shall never forget;
One touch of your hand to mine, O boy, reach'd up as you lay on the ground;
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle;
Till late in the night reliev'd, to the place at last again I made my way;
Found you in death so cold, dear comrade—found your body, son of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding;)
Bared your face in the starlight—curious the scene—cool blew the moderate night-wind;
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the battle-field spreading;
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet, there in the fragrant silent night;
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh—Long, long I gazed;
Then on the earth partially reclining, sat by your side, leaning my chin in my hands;
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you, dearest comrade—Not a tear, not a word;
Vigil of silence, love and death—vigil for you my son and my soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward stole;
Vigil final for you, brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living—I think we shall surely meet again;)
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn appear'd,

My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head, and carefully under feet;
And there and then, and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited;
Ending my vigil strange with that—vigil of night and battle-field dim;
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding;)
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain—vigil I never forget, how as day brighten'd,
I rose from the chill ground, and folded my soldier well in his blanket,
And buried him where he fell.

A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD-PREST, AND THE ROAD UNKNOWN.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

A MARCH in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown;
A route through a heavy wood, with muffled steps in the darkness;
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating;
Till after midnight glimmer upon us, the lights of a dim-lighted building;
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the dim-lighted building;
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads—'tis now an impromptu hospital;
—Entering but for a minute, I see a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made:
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps,
And by one great pitchy torch, stationary, with wild red flame, and clouds of smoke;
By these, crowds, groups of forms, vaguely I see, on the floor, some in the pews laid down;
At my feet more distinctly, a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of bleeding to death, (he is shot in the abdomen;)
I staunch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is white as a lily;)

Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene, fain to absorb it all;
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of them dead;
Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of ether, the odor of blood;
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms of soldiers—the yard outside also fill'd;
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some in the death-spasm sweating;
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or calls;
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches;
These I resume as I chant—I see again the forms, I smell the odor;
Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, Fall in;*
But first I bend to the dying lad—his eyes open—a half-smile gives he me;
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the darkness,
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the ranks,
The unknown road still marching.

A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAY-BREAK GREY AND DIM.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

A SIGHT in camp in the day-break grey and dim,
As from my tent I emerge so early, sleepless,
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air, the path near by the hospital tent,
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there, untended lying,
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woollen blanket,
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious, I halt, and silent stand;
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest, the first, just lift the blanket:
Who are you, elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?
Who are you, my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step—And who are you, my child and darling?
Who are you, sweet boy, with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third—a face nor child, nor old, very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;
Young man, I think I know you—I think this face of yours is the face of the Christ himself;
Dead and divine, and brother of all, and here again he lies.

NOT THE PILOT.

First published in 1860.

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into port, though beaten back, and many times baffled;
Not the path-finder, penetrating inland, weary and long,
By deserts parch'd, snows-chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres till he reaches his destination,
More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to compose a free march for These States,
To be exhilarating music to them—a battle-call, rousing to arms, if need be[1]—years, centuries hence.

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves, kick'd by my feet, (for 'twas autumn,)
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier,
Mortally wounded he, and buried on the retreat, (easily all could I understand;)
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet this sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering;
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of life;

[1] "a battle-call rousing to arms, if need be" added in 1870.

Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt, alone,
or in the crowded street,
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave—comes the inscription rude in Virginia's woods,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D BENEATH ME.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me!
Your summer wind was warm enough—yet the air I breathed froze me;
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me;
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself;
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat?

THE DRESSER.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

1

An old man bending, I come, among new faces,
Years looking backward, resuming, in answer to children,
Come tell us, old man, as from young men and maidens that love me;
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these chances,
Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was equally brave;)
Now be witness again—paint the mightiest armies of earth;
Of those armies so rapid, so wondrous, what saw you to tell us?
What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,
Of hard-fought engagements, or sieges tremendous, what deepest remains?

2

O maidens and young men I love, and that love me,
What you ask of my days, those the strangest and sudden your talking recalls;
Soldier alert I arrive, after a long march, cover'd with sweat and dust;

In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in the rush of successful charge;
Enter the captur'd works . . . . yet lo! like a swift-running river, they fade;
Pass and are gone, they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils or soldiers' joys;
(Both I remember well—many the hardships, few the joys, yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand,
In nature's reverie sad, with hinged knees returning, I enter the doors—(while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow me without noise, and be of strong heart.)

3

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground, after the battle brought in;
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass, the ground;
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd hospital;
To the long rows of cots, up and down, each side, I return;
To each and all, one after another, I draw near—not one do I miss;
An attendant follows, holding a tray—he carries a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand, to dress wounds;
I am firm with each—the pangs are sharp, yet unavoidable;
One turns to me his appealing eyes—(poor boy! I never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if that would save you.)

4

On, on I go!—(open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand, tear not the bandage away;)

The neck of the cavalry-man, with the bullet through and through, I examine;
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet life struggles hard;
(Come, sweet death! be persuaded, O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter and blood;
Back on his pillow the soldier bends, with curv'd neck, and side-falling head;
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, (he dares not look on the bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.)

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep;
But a day or two more—for see, the frame all wasted already, and sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive,
While the attendant stands behind aside me, holding the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out;
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand—(yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame.)

5

Thus in silence, in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals;
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night—some are so young;
Some suffer so much—I recall the experience sweet and sad;
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

LONG, TOO LONG, O LAND.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Long, too long, O land,
Traveling roads all even and peaceful, you learn'd from joys and prosperity only;
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish—advancing, grappling with direst fate, and recoiling not;
And now to conceive, and show to the world, what your children en-masse really are;
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children en-masse really are?)

GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

I

Give me the splendid silent sun, with all his beams full-dazzling;
Give me juicy autumnal fruit, ripe and red from the orchard;
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows;
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape;
Give me fresh corn and wheat—give me serene-moving animals, teaching content;
Give me nights perfectly quiet, as on high plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars;
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers, where I can walk undisturb'd;
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman, of whom I should never tire;
Give me a perfect child—give me, away, aside from the noise of the world, a rural, domestic life;
Give me to warble spontaneous songs, reliev'd, recluse by myself, for my own ears only;
Give me solitude—give me Nature—give me again, O Nature, your primal sanities!
—These, demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife;)
These to procure, incessantly asking, rising in cries from my heart,
While yet incessantly asking, still I adhere to my city;
Day upon day, and year upon year, O city, walking your streets,

Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time, refusing to give me up ;
Yet giving to make me glutted, enrich'd of soul—you give me forever faces ;
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my cries ;
I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

2

Keep your splendid, silent sun ;
Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods ;
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields and orchards ;
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields, where the Ninth-month bees hum ;
Give me faces and streets ! give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs !
Give me interminable eyes ! give me women ! give me comrades and lovers by the thousand !
Let me see new ones every day ! let me hold new ones by the hand every day !
Give me such shows ! give me the streets of Manhattan !
Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me the sound of the trumpets and drums !
(The soldiers in companies or regiments—some, starting away, flush'd and reckless ;
Some, their time up, returning, with thinn'd ranks—young, yet very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing ;)
—Give me the shores and the wharves heavy-fringed with the black ships !
O such for me ! O an intense life ! O full to repletion, and varied !
The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me !
The saloon of the steamer ! the crowded excursion for me ! the torch-light procession !
The dense brigade, bound for the war, with high piled military wagons following ;
People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants ;
Manhattan streets, with their powerful throbs, with the beating drums, as now ;
The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of muskets, (even the sight of the wounded ;)

Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus—with
varied chorus, and light of the sparkling eyes;
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

1

THE last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here—and there beyond, it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

2

Lo! the moon ascending!
Up from the east, the silvery round moon;
Beautiful over the house tops, ghastly phantom moon;
Immense and silent moon.

3

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles;
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,
As with voices and with tears.

4

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring;
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,
Strikes me through and through.

5

For the son is brought with the father;
In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell;
Two veterans, son and father, dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them.

6

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive;
And the day-light o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

7

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd;
('Tis some mother's large, transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.)

8

O strong dead-march, you please me!
O moon immense, with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans, passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

9

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music;
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE PROPHETIC A VOICE.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,
Be not dishearten'd—Affection shall solve the problems of Freedom yet;
Those who love each other shall become invincible—they shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All! you shall yet be victorious!
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers;
If need be, a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade;
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another, an Oregonese, shall be friends triune,
More precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come;
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see manly affection;
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly;
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron;
I, extatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by the lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?[1]
—Nay—nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865, under title of "The Veteran's Vision."

WHILE my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars are over long,
And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the vacant midnight passes,[2]
And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just hear, the breath of my infant,
There in the room, as I wake from sleep, this vision presses upon me:
The engagement opens there and then, in fantasy[3] unreal;
The skirmishers begin—they crawl cautiously ahead—I hear the irregular snap! snap!
I hear the sounds of the different missiles—the short *t-h-t! t-h-t!* of the rifle balls;
I see the shells exploding, leaving small white clouds—I hear the great shells shrieking as they pass;
The grape, like the hum and whirr of wind through the trees, (quick, tumultuous, now the contest rages!)

[1] Lines 19 and 20 originally were part of No. 5 Calamus in edition of 1860. See page —.
[2] Drum-Taps, 1865. For "vacant" reads "mystic."
[3] Drum-Taps, 1865. For "in fantasy" reads "in my busy brain," etc.

All the scenes at the batteries themselves rise in detail before me again ;
The crashing and smoking—the pride of the men in their pieces ;
The chief gunner ranges and sights his piece, and selects a fuse of the right time ;
After firing, I see him lean aside, and look eagerly off to note the effect ;
—Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging—(the young colonel leads himself this time, with brandish'd sword ;)
I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys, (quickly fill'd up, no delay ;)
I breathe the suffocating smoke—then the flat clouds hover low, concealing all ;
Now a strange lull comes for a few seconds, not a shot fired on either side ;
Then resumed, the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls, and orders of officers ;
While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts to my ears a shout of applause, (some special success ;)
And ever the sound of the cannon, far or near, (rousing, even in dreams, a devilish exultation, and all the old mad joy, in the depths of my soul ;)
And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions—batteries, cavalry, moving hither and thither ;
(The falling, dying, I heed not—the wounded, dripping and red, I heed not—some to the rear are hobbling ;)
Grime, heat, rush—aid-de-camps galloping by, or on a full run ;
With the patter of small arms, the warning *s-s t* of the rifles, (these in my vision I hear or see,)
And bombs busting in air, and at night the vari-color'd rockets.

I SAW OLD GENERAL AT BAY.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

I saw old General at bay ;
(Old as he was, his grey eyes yet shone out in battle like stars ;)
His small force was now completely hemm'd in, in his works ;
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines—a desperate emergency ;
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks—but two or three were selected ;

I saw them receive their orders aside—they listen'd with care—
the adjutant was very grave;
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their lives.

O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

O TAN-FACED prairie-boy!
Before you came to camp, came many a welcome gift;
Praises and presents came, and nourishing food—till at last, among the recruits,
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd on each other,
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world, you gave me.

LOOK DOWN FAIR MOON.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

LOOK down, fair moon, and bathe this scene;
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods, on faces ghastly, swollen, purple;
On the dead, on their backs, with their arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon.

RECONCILIATION.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865–6.

WORD over all, beautiful as the sky!
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world:
. . . For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near;
I bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE.

(Washington City, 1865.)[1]

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865–6.

Spirit whose work is done! spirit of dreadful hours!
Ere, departing, fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever unfaltering pressing;)
Spirit of many a solemn day, and many a savage scene! Electric spirit!
That with muttering voice, through the war[2] now closed, like a tireless phantom flitted,
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and beat the drum;
—Now, as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last, reverberates round me;
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the battles;
While the muskets of the young men yet lean over their shoulders;
While I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders;
While those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them, appearing in the distance, approach and pass on, returning homeward,
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro, to the right and left,
Evenly, lightly rising and falling, as the steps keep time;
—Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as death next day;
Touch my mouth, ere you depart—press my lips close!
Leave me your pulses of rage! bequeath them to me! fill me with currents convulsive!
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants, when you are gone;
Let them identify you to the future, in these songs.

[1] Added in 1870.
[2] When Lilacs, etc. For "war" reads "years."

HOW SOLEMN, AS ONE BY ONE.

(Washington City, 1865.[1])

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

How solemn, as one by one,
As the ranks returning, all worn and sweaty—as the men file by where I stand;
As the faces, the masks appear—as I glance at the faces, studying the masks;
(As I glance upward out of this page, studying you, dear friend, whoever you are;)
How solemn the thought of my whispering soul, to each in the ranks, and to you;
I see behind each mask, that wonder, a kindred soul;
O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are:
. . . The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good as the best,
Waiting, secure and content, which the bullet could never kill,
Nor the bayonet stab, O friend!

NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Not youth pertains to me,
Nor delicatesse—I cannot beguile the time with talk;
Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant;
In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still—for learning inures not to me;
Beauty, knowledge,[2] inure not to me—yet there are two or three things inure to me;
I have nourish'd the wounded, and sooth'd many a dying soldier,
And at intervals, waiting, or in the midst of camp,
Composed these songs.[3]

[1] Added in 1870.
[2] Drum-Taps reads "Beauty, knowledge, fortune," etc.
[3] Drum-Taps. For lines 7 and 8 read "And at intervals I have strung together a few songs,
Fit for war, and the life of the camp."

TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

To the leaven'd soil they trod, calling, I sing, for the last;
(Not cities, nor man alone, nor war, nor the dead,
But forth from my tent emerging for good—loosing, untying the tent-ropes;)
In the freshness, the forenoon air, in the far-stretching circuits and vistas, again to peace restored,
To the fiery fields emanative, and the endless vistas beyond—to the south and the north;
To the leaven'd soil of the general western world, to attest my songs,
(To the average earth, the wordless earth, witness of war and peace,)
To the Alleghanian hills, and the tireless Mississippi,
To the rocks I, calling, sing, and all the trees in the woods,
To the plain of the poems of heroes, to the prairie spreading wide,
To the far-off sea, and the unseen winds, and the same impalpable air;
. . . And responding, they answer all, (but not in words,)
The average earth, the witness of war and peace, acknowledges mutely;
The prairie draws me close, as the father, to bosom broad, the son;
The Northern ice and rain, that began me, nourish me to the end;
But the hot sun of the South is to ripen my songs.

DELICATE CLUSTER.

First published in 1870.

Delicate cluster! flag of teeming life!
Covering all my lands! all my sea-shores lining!
Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through the smoke of battle pressing!
How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)
Flag cerulean! sunny flag! with the orbs of night dappled!
Ah my silvery beauty! ah my woolly white and crimson!
Ah to sing the song of you, my matron mighty!
My sacred one, my mother.

SONG OF THE BANNER AT DAY-BREAK.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

POET.

O a new song, a free song,
Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by sounds, by voices clearer,
By the wind's voice and that of the drum,
By the banner's voice, and child's voice, and sea's voice, and father's voice,
Low on the ground and high in the air,
On the ground where father and child stand,
In the upward air where their eyes turn,
Where the banner at day-break is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?
Words no more, for hearken and see,
My song is there in the open air—and I must sing,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and twine in,
Man's desire and babe's desire—I'll twine them in, I'll put in life;
I'll put the bayonet's flashing point—I'll let bullets and slugs whizz;
(As one carrying a symbol and menace, far into the future,
Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware! Beware and arouse!*)[1]
I'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full of volition, full of joy;
Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

PENNANT.[2]

Come up here, bard, bard;
Come up here, soul, soul;
Come up here, dear little child,
To fly in the clouds and winds with me,[3] and play with the measureless light.

[1] Lines 16 and 17 added in 1870.
[2] Drum-Taps reads "Banner and Pennant."
[3] Drum-Taps. For "me" reads "us."

CHILD.

Father, what is that in the sky beckoning to me with long finger?
And what does it say to me all the while?

FATHER.

Nothing, my babe, you see in the sky;
And nothing at all to you it says. But look you, my babe,
Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you the money-shops opening;
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the streets with goods:
These! ah, these! how valued and toil'd for, these!
How envied by all the earth!

POET.

Fresh and rosy red, the sun is mounting high;
On floats the sea in distant blue, careering through its channels;
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea, setting in toward land;
The great steady wind from west and west-by-south,
Floating so buoyant, with milk-white foam on the waters.

But I am not the sea, nor the red sun;
I am not the wind, with girlish laughter;
Not the immense wind which strengthens—not the wind which lashes;
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to terror and death;
But I am[1] that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,
Which the birds know in the woods, mornings and evenings,
And the shore-sands know, and the hissing wave, and that banner and pennant,
Aloft there flapping and flapping.

CHILD.

O father, it is alive—it is full of people—it has children!
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children!
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast! O my father,
It is so broad, it covers the whole sky!

[1] Drum-Taps reads "But I am of that," etc.

FATHER.

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,
What you are saying is sorrowful to me—much it displeases me;
Behold with the rest, again I say—behold not banners and pennants aloft;
But the well-prepared pavements behold—and mark the solid wall'd houses.

BANNER AND PENNANT.

Speak to the child, O bard, out of Manhattan;
(The war is over—yet never over . . . . out of it, we are born to real life and identity;)[1]
Speak to our children all, or north or south of Manhattan,
Where our factory-engines hum, where our miners delve the ground,
Where our hoarse Niagara rumbles, where our prairie-plows are plowing;
Speak, O bard! point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over all —and yet we know not why;
For what are we, mere strips of cloth, profiting nothing,
Only flapping in the wind?

POET.

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone;
I hear again[2] the tramp of armies, I hear the challenging sentry;
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men—I hear LIBERTY!
I hear the drums beat, and the trumpets yet[3] blowing;
I myself move abroad, swift-rising, flying then;
I use the wings of the land-bird, and use the wings of the sea-bird, and look down as from a height;
I do not deny the precious results of peace—I see populous cities, with wealth incalculable;
I see numberless farms—I see the farmers working in their fields or barns;
I see mechanics working—I see buildings everywhere founded, going up, or finish'd;
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along railroad tracks, drawn by the locomotives;

[1] Line 37 added in 1870.
[2] "again" added in 1870.
[3] "yet" added in 1870.

I see the stores, depots, of Boston, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans;
I see far in the west the immense area of grain—I dwell awhile, hovering;
I pass to the lumber forests of the north, and again to the southern plantation, and again to California;
Sweeping the whole, I see the countless profit, the busy gatherings, earned wages;
See the identity formed out of thirty-eight spacious and haughty States (and many more to come;)
See forts on the shores of harbors—see ships sailing in and out;
Then over all, (aye! aye!) my little and lengthen'd pennant, shaped like a sword,
Runs swiftly up, indicating war and defiance—And now the halyards have rais'd it,
Side of my banner broad and blue—side of my starry banner,
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.

Banner and Pennant.

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard! yet farther, wider cleave!
No longer let our children deem us riches and peace alone;
We may be terror and carnage,[1] and are so now;
Not now are we any[2] one of these spacious and haughty States, (nor any five, nor ten;)
Nor market nor depot are we, nor money-bank in the city;
But these, and all, and the brown and spreading land, and the mines below, are ours;
And the shores of the sea are ours, and the rivers, great and small;
And the fields they moisten are ours, and the crops and the fruits are ours;
Bays and channels, and ships sailing in and out, are ours—and we over all,
Over the area spread below, the three or four[3] millions of square miles—the capitals,
The forty millions[4] of people—O bard! in life and death supreme,

[1] Drum-Taps reads "and carnage also," etc.
[2] "any" added in 1870.
[3] "or four" added in 1870.
[4] Drum-Taps. For "forty millions" reads "thirty-five millions."

We, even we, henceforth[1] flaunt out masterful, high up above,
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years, chanting through you,
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

CHILD.

O my father, I like not the houses;
They will never to me be anything—nor do I like money;
But to mount up there I would like, O father dear—that banner I like;
That pennant I would be, and must be.

FATHER.

Child of mine, you fill me with anguish;
To be that pennant would be too fearful;
Little you know what it is this day, and after this day, forever;[2]
It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy everything;
Forward to stand in front of wars—and O, such wars!—what have you to do with them?
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature death?

POET.

Demons and death then I sing;
Put in all, aye all, will I—sword-shaped pennant for war, and banner so broad and blue,
And a pleasure new and extatic, and the prattled yearning of children,
Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land, and the liquid wash of the sea;
And the black ships, fighting on the sea, enveloped in smoke;[3]
And the icy cool of the far, far north, with rustling cedars and pines;
And the whirr of drums, and the sound of soldiers marching, and the hot sun shining south;
And the beech-waves combing over the beach on my eastern shore, and my western shore the same;
And all between those shores, and my ever running Mississippi, with bends and chutes;

[1] Drum-Taps. For "henceforth" reads "from this day."
[2] Drum-Taps reads "and henceforth forever."
[3] Line 92 added in 1870.

And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields, and my fields of Missouri;
The CONTINENT—devoting the whole identity, without reserving an atom,
Pour in! whelm that which asks, which sings, with all, and the yield of all.

BANNER AND PENNANT.

Aye all! for ever, for all!
From sea to sea, north and south, east and west,
(The war is completed, the price is paid, the title is settled beyond recall;)[1]
Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the whole;
No more with tender lip, nor musical labial sound,
But, out of the night emerging for good, our voice persuasive no more,
Croaking like crows here in the wind.

POET.

(*Finale.*)

My limbs, my veins dilate;
The blood of the world has fill'd me full—my theme is clear at last:
—Banner so broad, advancing out of the night, I sing you haughty and resolute;
I burst through where I waited long, too long, deafen'd and blinded;
My sight, my hearing and tongue, are come to me, (a little child taught me;)
I hear from above, O pennant of war, your ironical call and demand;
Insensate! insensate! (yet I at any rate chant you,) O banner!
Not houses of peace indeed[2] are you, nor any nor all their prosperity, (if need be, you shall again[3] have every one of those houses to destroy them;
You thought not to destroy those valuable houses, standing fast, full of comfort, built with money;

[1] Line 102 added in 1870.
[2] "indeed" added in 1870.
[3] "again" added in 1870.

May they stand fast, then? Not an hour, except[1] you, above them and all, stand fast;)
—O banner! not money so precious are you, not farm produce you, nor the material good nutriment,
Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves from the ships;
Not the superb ships, with sail-power or steam-power, fetching and carrying cargoes,
Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues,—But you, as henceforth I see you,
Running up out of the night, bringing your cluster of stars, (ever-enlarging stars;)
Divider of day-break you, cutting the air, touch'd by the sun, measuring the sky,
(Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one poor little child,
While others remain busy, or smartly talking, forever teaching thrift, thrift;)
O you up there! O pennant! where you undulate like a snake, hissing so curious,
Out of reach—an idea only—yet furiously fought for, risking bloody death—loved by me!
So loved! O you banner leading the day, with stars brought from the night!
Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—(absolute owner of All)[2]—O banner and pennant!
I too leave the rest—great as it is, it is nothing—houses, machines are nothing—I see them not;
I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with stripes, I sing you only,
Flapping up there in the wind.

ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLORS.

(A Reminiscence of 1864.)

First published in 1870.

I

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient, hardly human,
With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony feet?
Why, rising by the roadside here, do you the colors greet?

[1] Drum-Taps. For "except" reads "unless."
[2] "(absolute owner of All)" added in 1870.

2

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sand and pines,
Forth from thy hovel door, thou, Ethiopia, com'st to me,
As, under doughty Sherman, I march toward the sea.)

3

Me, master, years a hundred, since from my parents sunder'd,
A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught;
Then hither me, across the sea, the cruel slaver brought.

4

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,
Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her darkling eye,
And curtseys to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

5

What is it, fateful woman—so blear, hardly human?
Why wag your head, with turban bound—yellow, red and green?
Are the things so strange and marvelous, you see or have seen?

LO! VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS!

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

Lo! Victress on the peaks!
Where thou,[1] with mighty brow, regarding the world,
(The world, O Libertad, that vainly conspired against thee;)
Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after thwarting them all;
Dominant,[2] with the dazzling sun around thee,
Flauntest now unharm'd, in immortal soundness and bloom—lo! in these hours supreme,
No poem proud, I, chanting, bring to thee—nor mastery's rapturous verse;
But a book,[3] containing night's darkness, and blood-dripping wounds,
And psalms of the dead.

[1] When Lilacs reads "Where thou standest," etc.
[2] When Lilacs reads "Where thou dominant," etc.
[3] When Lilacs reads "But a little book," etc.

WORLD, TAKE GOOD NOTICE.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

World, take good notice, silver stars fading,
Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,
Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.

THICK-SPRINKLED BUNTING.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865, under title of "Flag of Stars! Thick-Sprinkled Bunting."

Thick-sprinkled bunting! Flag of stars![1]
Long yet your road, fateful flag!—long yet your road, and lined
with bloody death!
For the prize I see at issue, at last is the world!
All its ships and shores I see, interwoven with your threads,
greedy banner!
—Dream'd again the flags of kings, highest born, to flaunt
unrival'd?
O hasten, flag of man! O with sure and steady step, passing
highest flags of kings,
Walk supreme to the heavens, mighty symbol—run up above
them all,
Flag of stars! thick-sprinkled bunting!

[1] Drum-Taps reads "Flag of stars! Thick-sprinkled bunting!"

LEAVES OF GRASS.

FACES.

First published in 1855. In 1856 under title of "Poem of Faces." In 1860 '67 under title of "Leaf of Faces."

1

SAUNTERING the pavement, or riding the country by-road—lo! such faces![1]
Faces of friendship, precision, caution, suavity, ideality;
The spiritual, prescient face—the always welcome, common, benevolent face,
The face of the singing of music—the grand faces of natural lawyers and judges, broad at the back-top;
The faces of hunters and fishers, bulged at the brows—the shaved blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens;
The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face;
The ugly face[2] of some beautiful Soul, the handsome detested or despised face;
The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face of the mother of many children;
The face of an amour, the face of veneration;
The face as of a dream, the face of an immobile rock;
The face withdrawn of its good and bad, a castrated face;
A wild hawk, his wings clipp'd by the clipper;
A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of the gelder.

Sauntering the pavement, thus, or crossing the ceaseless ferry, faces, and faces, and faces:[3]
I see them, and complain not, and am content with all.

2

Do you suppose I could be content with all, if I thought them their own finale?

[1] 1855 '56 '60. For "lo! such faces!" read "here then are faces!"
[2] 1855 reads "The welcome ugly face."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 read "Sauntering the pavement or crossing the ceaseless ferry, here then are faces."

This now is too lamentable a face for a man;
Some abject louse, asking leave to be—cringing for it;
Some milk-nosed maggot, blessing what lets it wrig to its hole.

This face is a dog's snout, sniffing for garbage;
Snakes nest in that mouth—I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea;
Its sleepy and wobbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs—this an emetic—they need no label;
And more of the drug-shelf, laudanum, caoutchouc, or hog's-lard.

This face is an epilepsy,[1] its wordless tongue gives out the unearthly cry,
Its veins down the neck distended, its eyes roll till they show nothing but their whites,
Its teeth grit, the palms of the hands are cut by the turn'd-in nails,
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground while he speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms,
And this is some murderer's knife, with a half-pull'd scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee;
An unceasing death-bell tolls there.

3

Those then[2] are really men—the bosses and tufts of the great round globe!

Features of my equals, would you trick me with your creas'd and cadaverous march?
Well,[3] you cannot trick me.

[1] 1855 adds "advertising and doing business."
[2] "then" added in 1856.
[3] 1855 reads "well then," etc.

I see your rounded, never-erased flow;
I see neath the rims of your haggard and mean disguises.

Splay and twist as you like—poke with the tangling fores of fishes or rats;
You'll be unmuzzled, you certainly will.

I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot they had at the asylum;
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not;
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tenement;
And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,
And I shall meet the real landlord, perfect and unharm'd, every inch as good as myself.

4

The Lord advances, and yet advances;
Always the shadow in front—always the reach'd hand bringing up the laggards.

Out of this face emerge banners and horses—O superb! I see what is coming;
I see the high pioneer-caps—I see the staves of runners clearing the way,
I hear victorious drums.

This face is a life-boat;
This is the face commanding and bearded, it asks no odds of the rest;
This face is flavor'd fruit, ready for eating;
This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of all good.

These faces bear testimony, slumbering or awake;
They show their descent from the Master himself.

Off the word I have spoken, I except not one—red, white, black, are all deific;
In each house is the ovum—it comes forth after a thousand years.

Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me;
Tall and sufficient stand behind, and make signs to me;
I read the promise, and patiently wait.

This is a full-grown lily's face,
She speaks to the limber-hipp'd man near the garden pickets,
Come here, she blushingly cries—*Come nigh to me, limber-hipp'd man,*[1]
Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,
Fill me with albescent honey, bend down to me,
Rub to me with your chafing beard, rub to my breast and shoulders.

5

The old face of the mother of many children!
Whist! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day morning,
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,
It hangs thin by the sassafras, the wild-cherry, and the cat-brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,
I heard what the singers were singing so long,[3]
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white froth and the water-blue.

Behold a woman!
She looks out from her quaker cap—her face is clearer and more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an arm-chair, under the shaded porch of the farm-house,
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her granddaughters spun it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go, and does not wish to go,
The justified mother of men.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 add "and give me your finger and thumb."
[2] 1855 '56. For "First-day" read "Sabbath."
[3] 1855 reads "I heard what the run of the poets were saying so long."

MANHATTAN'S STREETS I SAUNTER'D, PONDERING.

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of the Last Explanation of Prudence."

1

MANHATTAN'S streets I saunter'd, pondering,[1]
On time, space, reality—on such as these, and abreast with them, prudence.

2

After all, the last explanation remains to be made about prudence;
Little and large alike drop quietly aside from the prudence that suits immortality.

The Soul is of itself;
All verges to it—all has reference to what ensues;
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence;
Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects him or her in a day, month, any part of the direct life-time, or the hour of death, but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect life-time.

3

The indirect is just as much[2] as the direct,
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body, if not more.

Not one word or deed—not venereal sore, discoloration, privacy of the onanist, putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, peculation, cunning, betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution, but has results beyond death, as really as before death.

4

Charity and personal force are the only investments worth anything.

No specification is necessary—all that a male or female does, that is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much profit to him or her, in the unshakable order of the universe, and through the whole scope of it forever.

[1] 1856'60 read "All day I have walked the city, and talked with my friends and thought of prudence."

[2] 1856'60. For "just as much as" read "more than."

5

Who has been wise, receives interest,
Savage, felon, President, judge,[1] farmer, sailor, mechanic, literat,[2]
young, old, it is the same,
The interest will come round—all will come round.

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will forever affect all of the past, and all of the present, and all of the future,
All the brave actions of war and peace,
All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old, sorrowful, young children, widows, the sick, and to shunn'd persons,
All furtherance of fugitives, and of the escape of slaves,
All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and saw others fill the seats of the boats,
All offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake, or opinion's sake,
All pains of enthusiasts, scoff'd at by their neighbors,
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering of mothers,
All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,
All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose fragments we inherit,
All the good of the dozens[3] of ancient nations unknown to us by name, date, location,
All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no,
All suggestions of the divine mind of man, or the divinity of his mouth, or the shaping of his great hands;
All that is well thought or said this day on any part of the globe —or on any of the wandering stars, or on any of the fix'd stars, by those there as we are here;
All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you, whoever you are, or by any one;
These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities from which they sprang, or shall spring.

6

Did you guess anything lived only its moment?
The world does not so exist—no parts palpable or impalpable so exist;

[1] 1856 adds "prostitute."
[2] "literat" added in 1867.
[3] 1856 '60 '67. For "dozens" read "hundreds."

No consummation exists without being from some long previous consummation—and that from some other,
Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit nearer the beginning than any.

7

Whatever satisfies Souls is true;
Prudence entirely[1] satisfies the craving and glut of Souls;
Itself only finally satisfies the Soul;
The Soul has that measureless pride which revolts from every lesson but its own.

8

Now I give you an inkling;
Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks abreast with time, space, reality,
That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but its own.

What is prudence, is indivisible,
Declines to separate one part of life from every part,
Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous, or the living from the dead,
Matches every thought or act by its correlative,
Knows no possible forgiveness, or deputed atonement,
Knows that the young man who composedly peril'd his life and lost it, has done exceedingly well for himself without doubt,
That he who never peril'd his life, but retains it to old age in riches and ease, has probably achiev'd nothing for himself worth mentioning;
Knows that only that person has really learn'd, who has learn'd to prefer results,
Who favors Body and Soul the same,
Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct,
Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

ALL IS TRUTH.

First published in 1860.

O ME, man of slack faith so long!
Standing aloof—denying portions so long;[2]
Only aware to-day of compact, all-diffused truth;

[1] "entirely" added in 1860.
[2] After line 2, 1860 reads "We with mole's eyes, unrisen to buoyancy and vision unfree."

Discovering to-day there is no lie, or form of lie, and can be none, but grows as inevitably upon itself as the truth does upon itself,
Or as any law of the earth, or any natural production of the earth does.

(This is curious, and may not be realized immediately—But it must be realized;
I feel in myself that I represent falsehoods equally with the rest,
And that the universe does.)

Where has fail'd a perfect return, indifferent of lies or the truth?
Is it upon the ground, or in water or fire? or in the spirit of man? or in the meat and blood?

Meditating among liars, and retreating sternly into myself, I see that there are really no liars or lies after all,
And that nothing fails its perfect return—And that what are called lies are perfect returns,
And that each thing exactly represents itself, and what has preceded it,
And that the truth includes all, and is compact, just as much as space is compact,
And that there is no flaw or vacuum in the amount of the truth—but that all is truth without exception;
And henceforth I will go celebrate anything I see or am,
And sing and laugh, and deny nothing.

VOICES.

First published in 1860.

Now I make a leaf of Voices—for I have found nothing mightier than they are,
And I have found that no word spoken, but is beautiful, in its place.

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?
Surely, whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow,
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe.

All waits for the right voices;[1]
Where is the practis'd and perfect organ? Where is the develop'd Soul?
For I see every word utter'd thence, has deeper, sweeter, new sounds, impossible on less terms.

I see brains and lips closed—tympans and temples unstruck,
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to unclose,
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth what lies slumbering, forever ready, in all words.

MARCHES NOW THE WAR IS OVER.

AS I SAT ALONE BY BLUE ONTARIO'S SHORE.

First published in 1856, under title of "Poem of Many in One."

I[2]

As I sat alone, by blue Ontario's shore,
As I mused of these mighty days, and of peace return'd, and the dead that return no more,
A Phantom, gigantic, superb, with stern visage, accosted me;
Chant me the poem, it said, *that comes from the soul of America—chant me the carol of victory;*
And strike up the marches of Libertad—marches more powerful yet;[3]
And sing[4] *me before you go, the song of the throes of Democracy.*

(Democracy—the destin'd conqueror—yet treacherous lip-smiles everywhere,
And Death and infidelity at every step.)

[1] 1860 reads "Now I believe that all waits," etc.
[2] Lines 1–8 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[3] For lines 5 and 6, "Songs Before Parting" reads "*Chant me a poem*, it said, *of the range of the high soul of the poets,*
And chant of the welcome bards, that breathe but my native air—and invoke those bards."
[4] "Songs Before Parting." For "sing" reads "chant."

2

A Nation announcing itself,[1]
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated,
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds;[2]
What we are, we are—nativity is answer enough to objections;
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,
We are executive in ourselves—We are sufficient in the variety of ourselves,
We are the most beautiful to ourselves, and in ourselves;
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over the world;
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to scorn.[3]

Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves,
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.

(O mother! O sisters dear!
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us;
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)[4]

3

Have you thought there could be but a single Supreme?
There can be any number of Supremes—One does not countervail another, any more than one eyesight countervails another, or one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,
All is for individuals—All is for you,
No condition is prohibited—not God's, or any.[5]

[1] 1860 adds "(many in one)." This line begins poem in 1856 '60.
[2] 1856 '60 read "A breed whose testimony is behavior."
[3] Lines 18–19 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[4] Lines 23–25 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[5] 1856 '60. After line 29 read "If one is lost you are inevitably lost."

All comes by the body—only health puts you rapport with the universe.

Produce great persons, the rest follows.

4

America isolated I sing;
I say that works made here in the spirit of other lands, are so much poison in The States.[1]

(How dare such insects as we see assume to write poems for America?
For our victorious armies, and the offspring following the armies?)[2]

Piety and conformity to them that like!
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like!
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,
Crying, Leap from your seats, and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States[3] with a barb'd tongue, questioning every one I meet;[4]
Who are you, that wanted only to be told what you knew before?
Who are you, that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense?

(With pangs and cries, as thine own, O bearer of many children!
These clamors wild, to a race of pride I give.)[5]

O lands! would you be freer than all that has ever been before?[6]
If you would be freer than all that has been before, come listen to me.[7]

[1] Lines 32–33 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[2] For lines 34–35, 1856 reads:
"How dare a sick man, or an obedient man write poems?
Which is the theory or book that is not diseased?"
1860 reads "How dare a sick man, or an obedient man write poems for These States?
Which is the theory or book that, for our purposes is not diseased?"
[3] 1856 '60. For "who walks the States" read "who goes through the streets."
[4] 1856 '60 add "—questioning you up there now."
[5] Lines 43–44 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[6] 1856 '60 read "Are you or would you be better than all," etc.
[7] 1856 reads "If you would be better than all that has ever been before, come listen to me and I will tell you." 1860 reads "If you would be better than all that has ever been before, come listen to me and not otherwise."

Fear grace—Fear elegance, civilization,[1] delicatesse,
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice;
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of nature,
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of states and men.

Ages, precedents,[2] have long been accumulating undirected materials,
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done[3] their work, and pass'd to other spheres,
A work remains,[4] the work of surpassing all they have done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its own at all hazards,[5]
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound[6]—initiates the true use of precedents,
Does not repel them, or the past, or what they have produced under their forms,[7]
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly borne from the house,[8]
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door—that it was fittest for its days,
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped heir who approaches,
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period, one nation must lead,
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,
Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations,
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast doings of the day and night,

[1] "elegance, civilization" added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 add "poems." "Songs Before Parting" adds "chants."
[3] 1856 '60 read "Mighty bards have done," etc.
[4] 1856 '60 and "Songs Before Parting" read "One work forever remains," etc.
[5] 1856 reads "stands sternly by its own."
[6] 1856 '60 add "Sees itself promulger of men and women."
[7] 1856 '60 add "or amid other politics, or amid the idea of castes, or the old religions."
[8] 1856 '60 read "from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house."

Here is what moves in magnificent masses, careless[1] of particulars,
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness, the Soul loves,
Here the flowing trains—here the crowds, equality, diversity, the Soul loves.

6

Land of lands,[2] and bards to corroborate!
Of them, standing among them, one lifts to the light his west-bred face,
To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd, both mother's and father's,
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near,
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,
Attracting it Body and Soul to himself, hanging on its neck with incomparable love,
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and demerits,
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars, vocal in him,[3]
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes—Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in him,[4]
If the Atlantic coast stretch, or the Pacific coast stretch, he stretching with them north or south,
Spanning between them, east and west, and touching whatever is between them,
Growths growing from him to offset the growth of pine, cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory, cotton-wood, orange, magnolia,[5]
Tangles as tangled in him as any cane-brake or swamp,

[1] 1855 '60 read "carelessly faithful," etc.

[2] 1856 '60. For "Land of lands" read "Race of Races."

[3] 1856 '60 read "Making its geography, cities, beginnings, events, glories, defections, diversities, vocal in him."

[4] After line 80, 1856 reads "The blue breadth over the sea off Massachusetts and Maine, or over the Virginia and Maryland sea, or over inland Champlain, Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan, Superior, or over the Texan, Mexican, Cuban, Floridian seas, or over the seas of California and Oregon, not tallying the breadth of the waters below, more than the breadth of above and below is tallied in him."

[5] 1856 '60 add "cypress, lime-tree, tulip-tree, cactus, tamarind, persimmon."

He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated with
northern transparent ice,[1]
Off him pasturage, sweet and natural as savanna, upland, prairie,
Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of the
fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle ;[2]
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to good and
evil,
Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and present
times,
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red aborigines,
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo[3] stature
and muscle,
The haughty defiance of the Year 1—war, peace, the formation
of the Constitution,
The separate States, the simple, elastic scheme, the immigrants,
The Union, always swarming with blatherers, and always sure[4]
and impregnable,
The unsurvey'd interior, log houses, clearings, wild animals,
hunters, trappers ;
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, temperature, the
gestation of new States,
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members duly
coming up from the uttermost parts ;
Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farmers,
especially the young men,
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships—the gait
they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand
in the presence of superiors,
The freshness and candor of their physiognomy, the copiousness
and decision of their phrenology,
The picturesque looseness of their carriage,[5] their fierceness when
wrong'd,
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their curi-
osity, good temper, and open-handedness—the whole
composite make,[6]

[1] 1856 '60 add "and icicles hanging from the boughs."
[2] 1856 reads "Through him flights, songs, screams, answering those of the wild pigeon, high-hold, orchard-oriole, coot, surf-duck, red-snouldered hawk, fish-hawk, white-ibis, indian-hen, cat-owl, water-pheasant, qua-bird, pied-sheldrake, mocking-bird, buzzard, condor, night-heron, eagle."
[3] 1856 '60. For "embryo" read "the rapid."
[4] 1856 '60. For "sure" read "calm."
[5] 1656 '60 add "their deathless attachment to freedom,"
[6] "The whole composite make" added in 1860.

The prevailing ardor and enterprise, the large amativeness,
The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid movement of the population,
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling, gold-digging,
Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines, intersecting all points,
Factories, mercantile life, labor-saving machinery, the north-east, north-west, south-west,
Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap, southern plantation life,
Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it upon the ruins of all the rest;
On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your life or ours be the stake—and respite no more.[1]

7

(Lo! high toward heaven, this day,
Libertad! from the conqueress' field return'd,
I mark the new aureola around your head;
No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,
With war's flames, and the lambent lightnings playing,
And your port immovable where you stand;
With still the inextinguishable glance, and the clench'd and lifted fist,
And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner, utterly crush'd beneath you;
The menacing, arrogant one, that strode and advanced with his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife;
—Lo! the wide swelling one, the braggart, that would yesterday do so much!
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the earth!
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)[2]

8

[3]Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive, and ever keeps vista;

[1] 1856 '60. For lines 109–110 read "Slavery the tremulous spreading of hands to shelter it—the stern opposition to it, which ceases only when it ceases."
[2] Lines 111–122 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[3] Before line 123, 1856 '60 read "For these and the like, their own voices! For these, space ahead!"

Others adorn the past—but you, O days of the present, I adorn you!
O days of the future, I believe in you! I isolate myself for your sake;[1]
O America, because you build for mankind, I build for you!
O well-beloved stone-cutters! I lead them who plan with decision and science,
I lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next age![2]
But damn that which spends itself,[3] with no thought of the stain, pains, dismay, feebleness it is bequeathing.

9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,[4]
I heard the voice arising, demanding bards;[5]
By them, all native and grand—by them alone can The States be fused into the compact organism of a Nation.[6]

To hold men together by paper and seal, or by compulsion, is no account;
That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body, or the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras, These States, with veins full of poetical stuff, most need poets, and are to have the greatest, and use them the greatest;
Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall.

(Soul of love, and tongue of fire!
Eye to pierce the deepest deeps, and sweep the world!
—Ah, mother! prolific and full in all besides—yet how long barren, barren?)[7]

[1] "I isolate myself for your sake" added in "Songs Before Parting."
[2] 1856 '60 read "Bravas to states whose semetic impulses send wholesome children to the next age!"
[3] 1856 '60 and "Songs Before Parting" add "on flaunters and dallyers."
[4] Line 131 added in 1870.
[5] Line 132 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[6] 1856 '60 read "By great bards only can series of peoples and States be fused into the compact organism of one nation."
[7] Lines 138–40 added in "Songs Before Parting."

10

Of These States,[1] the poet is the equable man,
Not in him, but off from him, things are grotesque, eccentric, fail of their full returns,
Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is bad,
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, neither more nor less,
He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,
He is the equalizer of his age and land,
He supplies what wants supplying—he checks what wants checking,
In peace, out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agriculture, arts, commerce, lighting the study of man, the Soul, health, immortality, government;
In war, he is the best backer of the war—he fetches artillery as good as the engineer's—he can make every word he speaks draw blood;
The years straying toward infidelity, he withholds by his steady faith,
He is no argurer, he is judgment—(Nature accepts him absolutely;)[2]
He judges not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling round a helpless thing;
As he sees the farthest, he has the most faith,
His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,
In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,
He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement,
He sees eternity in men and women—he does not see men and women as dreams or dots.[3]

[1] For "Of These States," 1856 '60 and "Songs Before Parting" read "Of mankind."
[2] "(Nature accepts him absolutely;)" added in "Songs Before Parting."
[3] After line 157, 1856 reads "An American literat fills his own place,
He justifies science—did you think the demonstrable less divine than the mythical?
He stands by liberty according to the compact of the first day of the first year of These States,
He concentres in the real body and soul, and in the pleasure of things,
He possesses the superiority of genuineness over fiction and romance,
As he emits himself, facts are showered over with light.
The day-light is lit with more volatile light—the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,
For that idea the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,[1]
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign despots.

Without extinction is Liberty! without retrograde is Equality!
They live in the feelings of young men, and the best women;
Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth been always ready to fall for Liberty.[2]

II

For the great Idea!
That, O my brethren—that is the mission of Poets.[3]

Songs of stern defiance, ever ready,[4]
Songs of the rapid arming, and the march,
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead, the flag we know,
Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping!
I stand again in leaden rain, your flapping folds saluting;
I sing you over all, flying, beckoning through the fight—O the hard-contested fight!
O the cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles! the hurtled balls scream!

Each precise object, condition, combination, process, exhibits a beauty—the multiplication table its, the old age its, the carpenter's trade its, the grand-opera its,
The huge-hulled clean-shaped Manhattan clipper at sea, under steam or full sail, gleams with unmatched beauty,
The national circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs,
The commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs."

[1] For lines 158–9, 1856 '60 read "Of the idea of perfect individuals, the idea of These States, their bards walk in advance, leaders of leaders."

[2] After line 163, 1856 reads "Language-using controls the rest;
Wonderful is language!
Wondrous the English language, language of live men,
Language of ensemble, powerful language of resistance,
Language of a proud and melancholy stock, and of all who aspire,
Language of growth, faith, self-esteem, rudeness, justice, friendliness, prudence, decision, exactitude, courage,
Language to well-nigh express the unexpressible,
Language for the modern, language for America."

[3] Lines 164–5 added in "Songs Before Parting."

[4] Lines 166–178 added in "Songs Before Parting," in which edition line 166 reads:
"With their poems of stern defiance ever ready."

The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys pour incessant from the line;
Hark! the ringing word, *Charge!*—now the tussle, and the furious maddening yells;
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,
Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach, or be a poet here in The States?[1]
The place is august—the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here, may well prepare himself, body and mind,[2]
He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make lithe, himself,
He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many and stern questions.

Who are you, indeed, who would talk or sing[3] to America?
Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?
Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics, geography, pride, freedom, friendship, of the land? its substratums and objects?
Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day of the first year of Independence,[4] sign'd by the Commissioners, ratified by The States, and read by Washington at the head of the army?
Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?[5]
Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy?[6]

[1] Lines 179–80 added in 1860, in which edition for line 179 read "Are You indeed for Liberty?
Are you a man who would assume a place to teach here, or be a poet here?"

[2] 1856 reads "Who would use language to America may well," etc.

[3] "or sing" added in 1860.

[4] "Independence of The States?" ends the line in 1856, balance added in 1860.

[5] After line 187, 1856 '60 add "Do you acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgment, and set slavery at naught for life and death?"

[6] 1856 '60 read "Do you see who have left described processes and poems behind them, and assumed new ones?"

Are you faithful to things? do you teach as the land and sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amativeness, angers,[1] teach?
Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?[2]
Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies, whirls, fierce contentions? are you very strong?[3] are you really of the whole people?
Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?
Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating now to life itself?
Have you vivified[4] yourself from the maternity of These States?[5]
Have you too the old, ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality?
Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity; for the last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?
Is it uniform with my country?
Is it not something that has been better told or done before?
Have you not imported this, or the spirit of it, in some ship?
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness? is the good old cause in it?[6]
Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians, literats, of enemies' lands?
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here?
Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?
Does it sound, with trumpet-voice, the proud victory of the Union, in that secession war?[7]
Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air[8]—to appear again in my strength, gait, face?
Have real employments contributed to it? original makers—not mere amanuenses?
Does it meet modern discoveries, calibers, facts face to face?[9]

[1] 1856 '60 add "excesses, crimes."
[2] 1856 '60 read "through customs, laws, popularities?"
[3] "are you very strong?" etc., added in 1860.
[4] 1856. For "vivified" reads "possessed."
[5] After line 195, 1856 reads "Have you sucked the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children?"
[6] "is the good old cause in it?" added in 1870.
[7] Line 206 added in 1870.
[8] 1856 '60 add "nobility, meanness."
[9] After line 210, 1856 adds "Does it respect me? America? the Soul? to-day?" 1860. For "America" reads "Democracy."

What does it mean to me? to American persons, progresses, cities? Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas? the planter, Yankee, Georgian, native, immigrant, sailors, squatters, old States, new States?
Does it encompass all The States, and the unexceptional rights of all the men and women of the earth? (the genital impulse of These States;)
Does it see behind the apparent custodians, the real custodians, standing, menacing, silent—the mechanics, Manhattanese, western men, southerners, significant alike in their apathy, and in the promptness of their love?
Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally befallen, each temporizer, patcher, outsider, partialist, alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd anything of America?
What mocking and scornful negligence?
The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons;
By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away—poems distill'd from foreign poems pass away,
The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave ashes;
Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soul of literature;
America justifies itself, give it time—no disguise can deceive it, or conceal from it—it is impassive enough,
Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,
If its poets appear, it will in due time advance to meet them—there is no fear of mistake,
(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd, till his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters—he tastes sweetest who results sweetest in the long run;[1]
The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint;
In the need of poems, philosophy, politics, manners, engineering, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft, he or she is greatest who contributes the greatest original practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on the streets,[2]

[1] "in the long run" added in 1860.
[2] 1856 '60 read "fills the houses and streets."

People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers, positive knowers;
There will shortly be no more priests—I say[1] their work is done,
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual emergencies here,
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you shall be superb;
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with irresistible power;[2]
How dare you place anything before a man?[3]

14

Fall behind me, States!
A man before all—myself, typical before all.

Give me the pay I have served for!
Give me to sing the song of the great Idea![4] take all the rest;
I have loved the earth, sun, animals—I have despised riches,
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labor to others,
I have hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing known or unknown,
I have gone freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families,
I have read these leaves to myself in the open air—I have tried them by trees, stars, rivers,
I have dismiss'd whatever insulted my own Soul or defiled my Body,
I have claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully claim'd for others on the same terms,[5]
I have sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from every State;[6]
(In war of you, as well as peace, my suit is good, America—sadly I boast;

[1] "I say" added in 1860.
[2] 1856 '60 read "Friendship, self-esteem, justice, health," etc.
[3] Lines 234–236 added in 1860.
[4] 1856 '60 read "Give to me to speak beautiful words!" etc.
[5] After line 245, 1856 '60 read "I have studied my land, its idioms and men."
[6] Line 246 added in "Songs Before Parting."

Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd, to breathe his last;
This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd, restored,
To life recalling many a prostrate form:)[1]
—I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the taste of myself,
I reject none, I permit all.

(Say, O mother! have I not to your thought been faithful?
Have I not, through life, kept you and yours before me?)[2]

15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things!
It is not the earth, it is not America, who is so great,
It is I who am great, or to be great—it is you up there,[3] or any one;
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments, theories,
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form great individuals.

Underneath all, individuals!
I swear nothing is good to me now[4] that ignores individuals,
The American compact is altogether with individuals,
The only government is that which makes minute of individuals,
The whole theory of the universe is directed to one single individual—namely, to You.[5]

(Mother! with subtle sense severe—with the naked sword in your hand,
I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with individuals.)[6]

16

Underneath all, nativity,
I swear I will stand by my own nativity—pious or impious, so be it;
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,
Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from nativity.

[1] Lines 247–50 added in 1870.
[2] Lines 253–54 added in "Songs Before Parting," where "you and yours" reads "that alone."
[3] "Up there" added in "Songs Before Parting."
[4] "to me now" added in 1860.
[5] Line 264 added in 1860.
[6] Lines 265–6 added in "Songs Before Parting."

Underneath all is the need of the expression of love for men and women,
I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes of expressing love for men and women,
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for men and women.

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,
(Talk as you like, he only suits These States whose manners favor the audacity and sublime turbulence of The States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature, governments, ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,
Underneath all, to me is myself—to you, yourself—(the same monotonous old song.)[1]

17

O I see now, flashing, that this America is only you and me,
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,[2]
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, slavery, are you and me,
Its Congress is you and me—the officers, capitols, armies, ships, are you and me,
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,[3]
The war—that war so bloody and grim—the war I will henceforth forget—was you and me,[4]
Natural and artificial are you and me,
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me,
Past, present, future, are you and me.

[1] "(the same monotonous old song)" added in 1860. After line 277, 1856 '60 read "If all had not Kernels for you and me, what were it to you and me?"

[2] After line 279, 1856 '60 read "Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,
Its roughs, beards, haughtiness, ruggedness, are you and me,
Its ample geography, the Sierras, the prairies, Mississippi, Huron, Colorado, Boston, Toronto, Raleigh, Nashville, Havana, are you and me,
Its settlements, wars, the organic compact, peace, Washington, the Federal Constitution, are you and me,
Its young men's manners, speech, dress, friendships, are you and me."

[3] After line 282, 1856 '60 read "Its inventions, science, schools, are you and me,
Its deserts, forests, clearings, log-houses, hunters, are you and me."
1856 adds "The perpetual arrivals of immigrants are you and me."

[4] Line 283 added in 1870.

18

I swear I dare not shirk any part of myself,
Not any part of America, good or bad,[1]
Not the promulgation of Liberty—not to cheer up slaves and horrify foreign despots,
Not to build for that which builds for mankind,
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,
Not to justify science, nor the march of equality,
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn beloved of time.

I swear I am for those that have never been master'd!
For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd,
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never master.

I swear I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth![2]
Who inaugurate one, to inaugurate all.

I swear I will not be outfaced by irrational things!
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon me!
I will make cities and civilizations defer to me!
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the amount—and it I teach again.[3]

(Democracy! while weapons were everywhere aim'd at your breast,
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children—saw in dreams your dilating form;
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)[4]

19

I will confront these shows of the day and night!
I will know if I am to be less than they!
I will see if I am not as majestic as they!
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they!
I will see if I am to be less generous than they!

[1] 1856 reads "Not America, nor any part of America." 1856 '60 add
"Not my body, not friendship, hospitality, procreation,
Not my soul; not the last explanation of prudence,
Not the similitude that interlocks me with all identities that exist, or ever have existed,
Not faith, sin, defiance, nor any disposition or duty of myself."

[2] 1856 reads "abreast with America and with the earth!"

[3] Line 302 added in 1860.

[4] Lines 303–5 added in "Songs Before Parting."

I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and ships have meaning!
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for themselves, and I am not to be enough for myself.

20

I match my spirit against yours, you orbs, growths, mountains, brutes,
Copious as you are, I absorb you all in myself, and become the master myself.[1]

America isolated, yet embodying all, what is it finally except myself?
These States—what are they except myself?[2]

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked—it is for my sake,
I take you to be mine, you beautiful, terrible, rude forms.[3]

[4](Mother! bend down, bend close to me your face!
I know not what these plots and wars, and deferments are for;
I know not fruition's success—but I know that through war and peace your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

21

. . . . Thus, by blue Ontario's shore,
While the winds fann'd me, and the waves came trooping toward me,
I thrill'd with the Power's pulsations—and the charm of my theme was upon me,
Till the tissues that held me, parted their ties upon me.

[1] Line 314 added in 1860, which adds "The Many In One—what is it finally except myself?
These States—what are they except myself?"
[2] Lines 315–16 added in "Songs Before Parting."
[3] 1856 reads "I will learn why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked,
I take you to be mine, you beautiful, terrible, rude forms."
Which ends the poem in that edition.
1860 reads "I have learned why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked—it is for my sake,
I take you to be mine, you beautiful, terrible, rude forms."
Which ends the poem in that edition.
[4] Lines 319–32 added in "Songs Before Parting."

And I saw the free Souls of poets ;
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,
Strange, large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were disclosed to me.

22

O my rapt verse, my call—mock me not !
Not for the bards of the past—not to invoke them have I launch'd you forth,
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's shores,
Have I sung so capricious and loud, my savage song.

Bards for my own land, only, I invoke ;[1]
(For the war, the war is over—the field is clear'd,)
Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and onward,
To cheer, O mother, your boundless, expectant soul.[2]

Bards[3] grand as these days so grand !
Bards of the great Idea ! Bards of the peaceful[4] inventions ! (for the war, the war is over !)[5]
Yet Bards of the latent armies—a million soldiers waiting, ever-ready,
Bards towering like hills—(no more these dots, these pigmies, these little piping straws, these gnats, that fill the hour, to pass for poets ;)
Bards with songs as from burning coals, or the lightning's fork'd stripes !
Ample Ohio's bards—bards for California ! inland bards—bards of the war ;)[6]
(As a wheel turns on its axle, so I find my chants turning finally on the war ;)[7]
Bards of pride ! Bards tallying the ocean's roar, and the swooping eagle's scream !
You, by my charm, I invoke !

[1] "Songs Before Parting" reads "But, O strong soul of Poets, Bards for my own land, ere I go, I invoke."
[2] Lines 334–36 added in 1870.
[3] "Songs Before Parting" reads "you bards."
[4] "Songs Before Parting." For "peaceful" reads "wondrous."
[5] "(for the war, the war is over !)" added in 1870.
[6] "bards of the war" added in 1870.
[7] Line 343 added in 1870.

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

1

Come, my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready;
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

2

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We, the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

3

O you youths, western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
Plain I see you, western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

4

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied, over there beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden, and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

5

All the past we leave behind;
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world;
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

6

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,

Conquering, holding, daring, venturing, as we go, the unknown ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

7

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we, and piercing deep the mines within;
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

8

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high plateaus,
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

9

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental blood intervein'd;
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

10

O resistless, restless race!
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!
O I mourn and yet exult—I am rapt with love for all,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

11

Raise the mighty mother mistress,
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress, (bend your heads all,)
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd mistress,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

12

See, my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear, we must never yield or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions, frowning there behind us urging,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

13

On and on, the compact ranks,
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd,
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

14

O to die advancing on!
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

15

All the pulses of the world,
Falling in, they beat for us, with the western movement beat;
Holding single or together, steady moving, to the front, all for us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

16

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

17

All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

18

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,
Through these shores, amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

19

Lo! the darting bowling orb!
Lo! the brother orbs around! all the clustering suns and planets;
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

20

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

21

O you daughters of the west!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

22

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
(Shrouded bards of other lands! you may sleep—you have done your work;)
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

23

Not for delectations sweet;
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious;
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

24

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

25

Has the night descended?
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged, nodding on our way?
Yet a passing hour I yield you, in your tracks to pause oblivious,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

26

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the day-break call—hark! how loud and clear I hear it wind;
Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,
Pioneers! O pioneers.

TURN, O LIBERTAD.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Turn, O Libertad, for the war is over,[1]
(From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more, resolute, sweeping the world,)[2]
Turn from lands retrospective, recording proofs of the past;
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past;
From the chants of the feudal world—the triumphs of kings, slavery, caste;
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—give up that backward world;
Leave to the singers of hitherto—give them the trailing past;
But what remains, remains for singers for you—wars to come are for you;
(Lo! how the wars of the past have duly inured to you—and the wars of the present also inure:)

[1] "Drum Taps" reads "Turn, O Libertad, no more doubting."
[2] Line 2 added in 1870.

—Then turn, and be not alarm'd, O Libertad—turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

ADIEU TO A SOLDIER.

First published in 1870.

Adieu, O soldier!
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)
The rapid march, the life of the camp,
The hot contention of opposing fronts—the long manœuver,
Red battles with their slaughter,—the stimulus—the strong, terrific game,
Spell of all brave and manly hearts—the trains of Time through you, and like of you, all fill'd,
With war, and war's expression.

Adieu, dear comrade!
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,
Myself, and this contentious soul of mine,
Still on our own campaigning bound,
Through untried roads, with ambushes, opponents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis—often baffled,
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

AS I WALK THESE BROAD, MAJESTIC DAYS.

First published in 1860 in "Songs Before Parting," under title of "As I Walk Solitary, Unattended." See line 7.

As I walk these broad, majestic days of peace,
(For the war, the struggle of blood finish'd, wherein, O terrific Ideal!
Against vast odds, having gloriously won,
Now thou stridest on—yet perhaps in time toward denser wars,
Perhaps to engage in time in still more dreadful contests, dangers,
Longer campaigns and crises, labors beyond all others[1];
—As I walk solitary, unattended,

[1] Lines 1–6 added in 1870.

Around me I hear that eclat of the world—politics, produce,
The announcements of recognized things—science,
The approved growth of cities, and the spread of inventions.

I see the ships, (they will last a few years,)
The vast factories, with their foremen and workmen,
And here the indorsement of all, and do not object to it.

But I too announce solid things ;[1]
Science, ships, politics, cities, factories, are not nothing—I watch them,[2]
Like a grand procession, to music of distant bugles, pouring, triumphantly moving—and grander heaving in sight ;[3]
They stand for realities—all is as it should be.

Then my realities ;
What else is so real as mine?
Libertad, and the divine average—Freedom to every slave on the face of the earth,
The rapt promises and luminé of seers—the spiritual world—these centuries lasting songs,
And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid announcements of any.

For we support all, fuse all,
After the rest is done and gone, we remain ;
There is no final reliance but upon us ;
Democracy rests finally upon us (I, my brethren, begin it,)
And our visions sweep through eternity.

WEAVE IN, WEAVE IN, MY HARDY LIFE.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Weave in ! weave in, my hardy life !
Weave yet[4] a soldier strong and full, for great campaigns to come ;
Weave in red blood ! weave sinews in, like ropes ! the senses, sight weave in !

[1] "Songs Before Parting" reads "But we too announce solid things."
[2] "Songs Before Parting." For "I watch them" reads "they serve."
[3] Line 16 added in 1870.
[4] Drum Taps for "yet" reads "weave."

Weave lasting sure! weave day and night the weft, the warp, incessant weave! tire not!
(We know not what the use, O life! nor know the aim, the end —nor really aught we know;
But know the work, the need goes on, and shall go on—the death-envelop'd march of peace as well as war goes on;)
For great campaigns of peace the same, the wiry threads to weave;
We know not why or what, yet weave, forever weave.

RACE OF VETERANS.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloomed," 1865-6.

Race of veterans! Race of victors![1]
Race of the soil, ready for conflict! race of the conquering march!
(No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race;)
Race henceforth[2] owning no law but the law of itself;
Race of passion and the storm.

LEAVES OF GRASS.

THIS COMPOST.

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of Wonder at The Resurrection of The Wheat."

I

Something startles me where I thought I was safest;
I withdraw from the still woods I loved;
I will not go now on the pastures to walk;
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea;
I will not touch my flesh to the earth, as to other flesh, to renew me.

O how can it be that the ground does not sicken?[3]

[1] "Race of Victors!" added in 1870.
[2] "Race henceforth" added in 1870.
[3] 1856 reads "How can the ground not sicken of men?" 1860 reads "O Earth! O how can the ground of you not sicken?"

How can you be alive, you growths of spring?
How can you furnish health, you blood of herbs, roots, orchards, grain?
Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within you?[1]
Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations;
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?
I do not see any of it upon you to-day—or perhaps I am deceiv'd;
I will run a furrow with my plough—I will press my spade through the sod, and turn it up underneath;
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2

Behold this compost! behold it well![2]
Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—Yet behold!
The grass of spring[3] covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noislessly through the mould in the garden,
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves,
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings, while the she-birds sit on their nests,
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,
The new-born of animals appear—the calf is dropt from the cow, the colt from the mare,
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green leaves,
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk—the lilacs bloom in the door-yards;[4]
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour dead.

What chemistry!
That the winds are really not infectious,

[1] 1856 for "within you" reads "in the earth."
[2] 1856 '60 read "Behold! This is the compost of billions of premature corpses."
[3] "of spring" added in 1870.
[4] "the lilacs bloom in the door-yards" added in 1870.

That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea, which is so amorous after me,
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its tongues,
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited themselves in it,
That all is clean forever and forever.
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,
That blackberries are so flavorous and juicy,
That the fruits of the apple-orchard, and of the orange-orchard —that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them poison me,
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease,
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was once a catching disease.

3

Now I am terrified at the Earth! it is that calm and patient,
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseas'd corpses,
It distils such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,
It renews with such unwitting looks, its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.

UNNAMED LANDS.

First published in 1860.

Nations ten thousand years before These States, and many times ten thousand years before These States;
Garner'd clusters of ages, that men and women like us grew up and travel'd their course, and pass'd on;
What vast-built cities—what orderly republics—what pastoral tribes and nomads;
What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all others;
What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions;
What sort of marriage—what costumes—what physiology and phrenology;
What of liberty and slavery among them—what they thought of death and the soul;

Who were witty and wise—who beautiful and poetic—who brutish and undevelop'd;
Not a mark, not a record remains—And yet all remains.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing, any more than we are for nothing;
I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every bit as much as we now belong to it, and as all will henceforth belong to it.

Afar they stand—yet near to me they stand,
Some with oval countenances, learn'd and calm,
Some naked and savage—Some like huge collections of insects,
Some in tents—herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,
Some prowling through woods—Some living peaceably on farms, laboring, reaping, filling barns,
Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces, factories, libraries, shows, courts, theatres, wonderful monuments.

Are those billions of men really gone?
Are those women of the old experience of the earth gone?
Do their lives, cities, arts, rest only with us?
Did they achieve nothing for good, for themselves?

I believe of all those billions of men and women that fill'd the unnamed lands, every one exists this hour, here or elsewhere, invisible to us, in exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life, and out of what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinn'd, in life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations, or any person of them, any more than this shall be the end of my nation, or of me;
Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature, products, games, wars, manners, crimes, prisons, slaves, heroes, poets,[1] I suspect their results curiously await in the yet unseen world—counterparts of what accrued to them in the seen world.
I suspect I shall meet them there,
I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those unnamed lands.

[1] 1860 adds "phrenology, coins, medals, jurisprudence, amativeness."

MANNAHATTA.

First published in 1860.

I WAS asking for something specific and perfect for my city,
Whereupon, lo! upsprang the aboriginal name![1]

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-sufficient;
I see that the word of my city is that word up there,
Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb, with tall and wonderful spires,
Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships—an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,
Numberless crowded streets—high growths of iron, slender, strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies;
Tide swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,
The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining islands, the heights, the villas,
The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well-model'd;
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business—the houses of business of the ship-merchants, and money-brokers—the river-streets;
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week;
The carts hauling goods—the manly race of drivers of horses—the brown-faced sailors;
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds aloft;
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells—the broken ice in the river, passing along, up or down, with the flood tide or ebb-tide;
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes;
Trottoirs throng'd—vehicles—Broadway—the women—the shops and shows,
The parades, processions, bugles playing, flags flying, drums beating;
A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young men;
The free city! no slaves! no owners of slaves!
The beautiful city, the city of hurried and sparkling waters! the city of spires and masts!

[1] 1860 reads "And behold! here is the aboriginal name!"

The city nested in bays! my city!
The city of such women, I am mad to be with them! I will return after death to be with them!
The city of such young men, I swear I cannot live happy, without I often go talk, walk, eat, drink, sleep, with them!

OLD IRELAND.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865

Far hence, amid an isle of wondrous beauty,
Crouching over a grave, an ancient, sorrowful mother,
Once a queen—now lean and tatter'd, seated on the ground,
Her old white hair drooping dishevel'd round her shoulders;
At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,
Long silent—she too long silent—mourning her shrouded hope and heir;
Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow, because most full of love.

Yet a word, ancient mother;
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground, with forehead between your knees;
O you need not sit there, veil'd in your old white hair, so dishevel'd;
For know you, the one you mourn is not in that grave;
It was an illusion—the heir, the son you love, was not really dead;
The Lord is not dead—he is risen again, young and strong, in another country;
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp, by the grave,
What you wept for, was translated, pass'd from the grave,
The winds favor'd, and the sea sail'd it,
And now with rosy and new blood,
Moves to-day in a new country.

TO ORATISTS.

First published in 1860.

To oratists—to male or female,
Vocalism,[1] measure, concentration, determination, and the divine power to use words.

[1] 1860 '67 add "breath."

[1]Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long trial? from vigorous practice? from physique?
Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they?[2]
Come duly to the divine power to use words?

For only at last, after many years—after chastity, friendship, procreation, prudence, and nakedness;
After treading ground and breasting river and lake;
After a loosen'd throat—after absorbing eras, temperaments, races—after knowledge, freedom, crimes;
After complete faith—after clarifyings, elevations, and removing obstructions;
After these, and more, it is just possible there comes to a man, a woman, the divine power to use words.

Then toward that man or that woman, swiftly hasten all—None refuse, all attend;
Armies, ships, antiquities, the dead, libraries, paintings, machines, cities, hate, despair, amity, pain, theft, murder, aspiration, form in close ranks;
They debouch as they are wanted to march obediently through the mouth of that man, or that woman.

. . . . O I see arise orators fit for inland America;
And I see it is as slow to become an orator as to become a man;
And I see that all[3] power is folded in a great vocalism.

Of a great vocalism, the merciless light thereof shall pour, and the storm rage,
Every flash shall be a revelation, an insult,
The glaring flame on depths,[4] on heights, on suns, on stars,
On the interior and exterior of man or woman,
On the laws of Nature—on passive materials,
On what you called death—(and what to you therefore was death,
As far as there can be death.)

[1] 1860 before line 3 reads "Are you eligible?"
[2] 1860 after line 4 adds "Remembering inland America, the high plateaus, stretching long?
Remembering Kanada—remembering what edge of the Mexican Sea?"
[3] "all" added in 1870.
[4] 1860 reads "flame turned on depths," etc.

A HAND-MIRROR.

First published in 1860.

HOLD it up sternly! See this it sends back! (Who is it? Is it you?)
Outside fair costume—within ashes and filth,
No more a flashing eye—no more a sonorous voice or springy step;
Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerealee's flesh,
Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,
Words babble, hearing and touch callous,
No brain, no heart left—no magnetism of sex;
Such, from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

GERMS.

First published in 1860.

FORMS, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,
The ones known, and the ones unknown—the ones on the stars,
The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,
Wonders as of those countries—the soil, trees, cities, inhabitants, whatever they may be,
Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless combinations and effects;
Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or anywhere, stand provided for in a handful of space, which I extend my arm and half enclose with my hand;
That contains the start of each and all—the virtue, the germs of all.[1]

O ME! O LIFE!

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

O ME! O life! . . . of the questions of these recurring;
Of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities fill'd with the foolish;

[1] 1860 adds "That is the theory as of origins."

Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light—of the objects mean—of the struggle ever renew'd;
Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me;
Of the empty and useless years of the rest—with the rest me intertwined;
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here—that life exists, and identity;
That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.

THOUGHTS.

First published in 1860.

Of Public Opinion;
Of a calm and cool fiat, sooner or later, (How impassive! How certain and final!)
Of the President with pale face, asking secretly to himself, *What will the people say at last?*
Of the frivolous Judge—Of the corrupt Congressman, Governor, Mayor—Of such as these, standing helpless and exposed;
Of the mumbling and screaming priest—(soon, soon deserted;)
Of the lessening, year by year, of venerableness, and of the dicta of officers, statutes, pulpits, schools;
Of the rising forever taller and stronger and broader, of the intuitions of men and women, and of self-esteem, and of personality;
—Of the New World—Of the Democracies, resplendent, en-masse;
Of the conformity of politics, armies, navies, to them and to me,
Of the shining sun by them—Of the inherent light, greater than the rest,
Of the envelopment of all by them, and of the effusion of all from them.

BEGINNERS.

First published in 1860.

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at intervals;)
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth;
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—What a paradox appears their age;
How people respond to them, yet know them not;
How there is something relentless in their fate, all times;
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great purchase.

SONGS OF INSURRECTION.

STILL THOUGH THE ONE I SING.

First published in 1870.

Still, though the one I sing,
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to Nationality,
I leave in him Revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O quenchless, indispensable fire!)

TO A FOIL'D EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONAIRE.

First published in 1856 under title of "Liberty Poem for Asia, Africa, Europe, America," etc. In 1860 '67 under title of "To a Foiled Revolter or Revoltress."

I

Courage yet![1] my brother or my sister!
Keep on! Liberty is to be subserv'd, whatever occurs;
That is nothing, that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any number of failures,
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any unfaithfulness,
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal statutes.

[1] "yet" added in 1870.

Revolt! and still revolt! revolt![1]
What we believe in waits latent forever through all the continents, and all the islands and archipelagos of the sea;[2]
What we believe in invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, knows no discouragement,
Waiting patiently, waiting its time.[3]

(Not songs of loyalty alone are these,
But songs of insurrection also;
For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel, the world over,
And he going with me leaves peace and routine behind him,
And stakes his life, to be lost at any moment.)

2

Revolt! and the downfall of tyrants![4]
The battle rages with many a loud alarm, and frequent advance and retreat,
The infidel triumphs—or supposes he triumphs,
Then the prison, scaffold, garrote, hand-cuffs, iron necklace and anklet, lead-balls, do their work,
The named and unnamed heroes pass to other spheres,
The great speakers and writers are exiled—they lie sick in distant lands,
The cause is asleep—the strongest throats are still, choked with their own blood,
The young men droop their eyelashes toward the ground when they meet;
—But for all this, liberty has not gone out of the place, nor the infidel enter'd into full possession.

When liberty goes out of a place, it is not the first to go, nor the second or third to go,
It waits for all the rest to go—it is the last.

[1] Line 6 added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 read "through Asia, Africa, Europe, America, Australia, Cuba, and all the islands," etc.
[3] 1856 '60 read "Waits patiently its time, a year, a century, a hundred centuries."
[4] Lines 10–15 added in 1870.

When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,[1]
And when all life, and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth,
Then only shall liberty, or the idea of liberty, be discharged from that part of the earth,
And the infidel come into full possession.[2]

3

Then courage![3] European revolter! revoltress![4]
For, till all ceases, neither must you cease.

I do not know what you are for, (I do not know what I am for myself, nor what anything is for,)
But I will search carefully for it even in being foil'd,
In defeat, poverty, misconception,[5] imprisonment—for they too are great.

Revolt! and the bullet for tyrants![6]
Did we think victory great?
So it is—But now it seems to me, when it cannot be help'd, that defeat is great,
And that death and dismay are great.

[1] 1856 reads "When there are no more memories of the lovers of the whole nations of the world." 1860 reads "When there are no more memories of the superb lovers of the nations of the world." After which, with the addition of the word "superb," editions of 1856'60 read.
"The lovers' names scouted in the public gatherings by the lips of the orators,
Boys not christened after them, but christened after traitors and murderers instead,
Laws for slaves sweet to the taste of people—the slave-hunt acknowledged."
1860 adds "Tyrants' and Priests' successes really acknowledged anywhere, for all the ostensible appearances." 1856'60 read "You or I walking abroad upon the earth, elated at the sight of slaves, no matter who they are."

[2] For lines 28–29, 1856'60 read "Then shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth,
Then shall the infidel and tyrant come into possession."
Which ends the poem in edition of 1856.

[3] "Then courage!" with lines 31–2–3–4–6–7–8 added in 1860.

[4] "Revolter! Revoltress!" added in 1867. "European" added in 1870.

[5] "misconception" added in 1870.

[6] Line 15 added in 1870.

FRANCE,

THE 18TH YEAR OF THESE STATES.

First published in 1860.

1

A GREAT year and place;
A harsh, discordant, natal scream out-sounding, to touch the mother's heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern Sea,
Heard over the waves the little voice,
Saw the divine infant, where she woke, mournfully wailing, amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash of falling buildings;
Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running—nor from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those borne away in the tumbrils;
Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.

2

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued retribution?
Could I wish humanity different?
Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?
Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

3

O Liberty! O mate for me!
Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve, to fetch them out in case of need;
Here too, though long repress, can never be destroy'd;[1]
Here too could rise at last, murdering and extatic;
Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

4

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,
And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,
But remember the little voice that I heard wailing—and wait with perfect trust, no matter how long;

[1] 1860 reads "still is not destroyed."

And from to-day, sad and cogent, I maintain the bequeath'd cause, as for all lands,
And I send these words to Paris with my love,
And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,
For I guess there is latent music yet in France—floods of it;
O I hear already the bustle of instruments—they will soon be drowning all that would interrupt them;
O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,
It reaches hither—it swells me to joyful madness,
I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,
I will yet sing a song for you, MA FEMME.

EUROPE,

THE 72D AND 73D YEARS OF THESE STATES.

First published in 1855, in 1856 under title of "Poem of the Dead Young Men of Europe," etc.

1

SUDDENLY, out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,
Like lightning it le'pt forth, half startled at itself,
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags—its hands tight to the throats of kings.

O hope and faith!
O aching close of exiled patriots'[1] lives!
O many a sicken'd heart!
Turn back unto this day, and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People! you liars, mark!
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming from his simplicity the poor man's wages,
For many a promise sworn by royal lips, and broken, and laugh'd at in the breaking,
Then in their power, not for all these, did the blows strike revenge, or the heads of the nobles fall;
The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

2

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and the frighten'd monarchs come back;

[1] "exiled patriots'" added in 1860.

Each comes in state, with his train—hangman, priest, tax-gatherer,
Soldier, lawyer, lord,[1] jailer, and sycophant.

Yet behind all, lowering, stealing[2]—lo, a Shape,
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front and form, in scarlet folds,
Whose face and eyes none may see,
Out of its robes only this—the red robes, lifted by the arm,
One finger, crook'd,[3] pointed high over the top, like the head of a snake appears.

3

Meanwhile, corpses lie in new-made graves—bloody corpses of young men;
The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of princes are flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud,
And all these things bear fruits—and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets—those hearts pierc'd by the gray lead,
Cold and motionless as they seem, live elsewhere with unslaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men, O kings!
They live in brothers, again ready to defy you!
They were purified by death—they were taught and exalted.

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom, but grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling, cautioning.

4

Liberty! let others despair of you! I never despair of you.

[1] "lord" added in 1860.
[2] "lowering, stealing" added in 1860.
[3] "crook'd" added in 1860.

Is the house shut? Is the master away?
Nevertheless, be ready—be not weary of watching;
He will soon return—his messengers come anon.

WALT WHITMAN'S CAUTION.

First published in 1860.

To The States, or any one of them, or any city of The States,
Resist much, obey little;
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved;
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city, of this earth, ever afterward resumes its liberty.

TO A CERTAIN CANTATRICE.

First published in 1860.

HERE, take this gift!
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or General,
One who should serve the good old cause, the great Idea, the progress and freedom of the race;[1]
Some brave confronter of despots—some daring rebel;[2]
—But I see that what I was reserving, belongs to you just as much as to any.

[1] 1860. After "cause" reads "the progress and freedom of the race, the cause of my Soul."
[2] Line 4 added in 1870.

LEAVES OF GRASS.

TO YOU.

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of You, Whoever You Are."

WHOEVER you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed[1] realities are to melt from under your feet and hands;
Even now, your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,
Your true Soul and Body appear before me,
They stand forth out of affairs—out of commerce, shops, law, science, work, forms, clothes, the house, medicine, print, buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering, dying.[2]

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my poem;
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb;
I should have made my way straight to you long ago;
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted nothing but you.

I will leave all, and come and make the hymns of you;
None have understood you, but I understand you;
None have done justice to you—you have not done justice to yourself;

[1] "supposed" added in 1867.
[2] 1856 reads "begetting, dying," and adds,
"They receive these in their places, they find these or the like of these, eternal, for reasons,
They find themselves eternal, they do not find that the water and soil tend to endure forever, and they not endure."

None but have found you imperfect—I only find no imperfection in you;
None but would subordinate you—I only am he who will never consent to subordinate you;
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre figure of all;
From the head of the centre figure spreading a nimbus of gold-color'd light;
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-color'd light;
From my hand, from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!
You have not known what you are—you have slumber'd upon yourself all your life;
Your eye-lids have been the same as closed most of the time;
What you have done returns already in mockeries;
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you;
Underneath them, and within them, I see you lurk;
I pursue you where none else has pursued you;
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others, or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me;
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these balk others, they do not balk me,
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death, all these I part aside.[1]

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied in you;
There is no virtue, no beauty, in man or woman, but as good is in you;

[1] 1856 '60 add "I track through your windings and turnings, I come upon you where you thought eye should never come upon you."

No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you;
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one, except I give the like carefully to you;
I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard![1]
These shows of the east and west are tame, compared to you;
These immense meadows—these interminable rivers—you are immense and interminable as they;
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of apparent dissolution—you are he or she who is master or mistress over them,
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements, pain, passion, dissolution.

The hopples fall from your ankles—you find an unfailing sufficiency;
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest, whatever you are promulges itself;
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing is scanted;
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you are picks its way.

SONGS OF PARTING.

AS THE TIME DRAWS NIGH.

First published in "Songs Before Parting," 1865–6, under title of "As Nearing Departure."

I

As the time draws nigh, glooming, a cloud,
A dread beyond, of I know not what, darkens me.

[1] 1856 reads "you are to hold your own at any hazard!"
[2] "Songs Before Parting" before line 1 reads "As nearing departure."

I shall go forth,
I shall traverse The States awhile[1]—but I cannot tell whither or how long;
Perhaps soon, some day or night while I am singing, my voice will suddenly cease.

2

O book, O chants! must all then amount to but this?
Must we barely arrive at this beginning of us? . . . And yet it is enough, O soul!
O soul! we have positively appear'd—that is enough.

YEARS OF THE MODERN.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865, under title of "Years of the Unperformed"

YEARS of the modern![2] years of the unperform'd!
Your horizon rises—I see it parting away for more august dramas;
I see not America only—I see not only Liberty's nation, but other nations preparing;
I see tremendous entrances and exits—I see new combinations—I see the solidarity of races;
I see that force advancing with irresistible power on the world's stage;
(Have the old forces, the old wars,[3] played their parts? are the acts suitable to them closed?)
I see Freedom, completely arm'd, and victorious, and very haughty, with Law on one side, and Peace on the other,[4]
A stupendous Trio, all issuing forth against the idea of caste;[5]
—What historic denouements are these we so rapidly approach?
I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions;
I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies broken;
I see the landmarks of European kings removed;
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all others give way;)
—Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day;
Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a God;

1 "awhile" added in 1870.
2 "Years of the modern" added in 1870.
3 "the old wars" added in 1870.
4 "and Peace on the other" added in 1870.
5 Drum-Taps reads "Both issuing forth," etc.

Lo! how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest;
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere—he colonizes the Pacific, the archipelagoes;
With the steam-ship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the the wholesale engines of war,
With these, and the world-spreading factories, he interlinks all geography, all lands;
—What whispers are these, O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the seas?
Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming, en-masse?—for lo! tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim;
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war;
No one knows what will happen next—such portents fill the days and nights;
Years prophetical! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms;
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes around me;
This incredible rush and heat—this strange extatic fever of dreams, O years!
Your dreams, O year, how they penetrate through me! (I know not whether I sleep or wake!)
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in shadow behind me,
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance upon me.

THOUGHTS.

First published in 1860.

I

[1]Of these years I sing,
How they pass and have pass'd,[2] through convuls'd pains as through parturitions;
How America illustrates birth, muscular youth, the promise, the sure fulfillment, the Absolute Success,[3] despite of people —Illustrates evil as well as good;

[1] 1860 begins poem "A Thought of what I am here for."
[2] "and have pass'd" added in 1867.
[3] "The Absolute Success" added in 1870.

How many hold despairingly yet to the models departed, caste, myths, obedience, compulsion, and to infidelity;
How few see the arrived models, the Athletes, the Western[1] States—or see freedom or spirituality—or hold any faith in results,
(But I see the Athletes—and I see the results of the war[2] glorious and inevitable—and they again leading to other results;)
How the great cities appear—How the Democratic masses, turbulent, wilful, as I love them;
How the whirl, the contest, the wrestle of evil with good, the sounding and resounding, keep on and on;
How society waits unform'd, and is for awhile between things ended and things begun;
How America is the continent of glories, and of the triumph of freedom, and of the Democracies, and of the fruits of society, and of all that is begun;
And how The States are complete in themselves—And how all triumphs and glories are complete in themselves, to lead onward,
And how these of mine, and of The States, will in their turn be convuls'd, and serve other parturitions and transitions,
And how all people, sights, combinations, the Democratic masses, too, serve—and how every fact, and war itself, with all its horrors,[3] serves,
And how now, or at any time, each serves the exquisite transition of death.

2

First published in 1860 as "Chants Democratic."

[4]Of seeds dropping into the ground—of birth,
Of the steady concentration of America, inland, upward, to impregnable and swarming places,
Of what Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and the rest, are to be,
Of what a few years will show there in Nebraska, Colorado, Nevada, and the rest;
(Or afar, mounting the Northern Pacific to Sitka or Aliaska;)[5]
Of what the feuillage of America is the preparation for—and of what all sights, North, South, East and West, are;

[1] "Western" added in 1870.
[2] "of the war" added in 1870.
[3] "and war itself, with all its horrors" added in 1870.
[4] 1860 begins poem "The thought of fruitage,
Of Death, (the life greater)—of seeds," etc.
[5] Line 5 added in 1870.

Of This Union, soak'd, welded in blood—of the solemn price paid—of the unnamed lost, ever present in my mind ;[1]
—Of the temporary use of materials, for identity's sake,
Of the present, passing, departing—of the growth of completer men than any yet,[2]
Of myself, soon, perhaps, closing up my songs by these shores,
Of California, of Oregon—and of me journeying to live and sing there ;
Of the Western Sea—of the spread inland between it and the spinal river,
Of the great pastoral area, athletic and feminine,
Of all sloping down there where the fresh free giver, the mother, the Mississippi flows,[3]
Of future women[4] there—of happiness in those high plateaus, ranging three thousand miles, warm and cold ;
Of mighty inland[5] cities yet unsurvey'd and unsuspected, (as I am also, and as it must be ;)
Of the new and good names—of the modern developments—of inalienable homesteads ;
Of a free and original life there—of simple diet and clean and sweet blood ;
Of litheness, majestic faces, clear eyes, and perfect physique there ;
Of immense spiritual results, future years, far west, each side of the Anahuacs ;
Of these leaves, well understood there, (being made for that area ;)
Of the native scorn of grossness and gain there ;
(O it lurks in me night and day—What is gain, after all, to savageness and freedom ?)

SONG AT SUNSET.

First published in 1860.

Splendor of ended[6] day, floating and filling me !
Hour prophetic—hour resuming the past !

[1] Line 7 added in 1870.
[2] 1860 reads "Of departing—of the growth of a mightier race than any yet."
[3] 1860 adds "and westward still."
[4] 1860 reads "men and women."
[5] "mighty inland" added in 1870.
[6] 1860. For "ended" reads "falling."

Inflating my throat—you, divine average!
You, Earth and Life, till the last ray gleams, I sing.

Open mouth of my Soul, uttering gladness,
Eyes of my Soul, seeing perfection,
Natural life of me, faithfully praising things;
Corroborating forever the triumph of things.

Illustrious every one!
Illustrious what we name space—sphere of unnumber'd spirits;
Illustrious the mystery of motion, in all beings, even the tiniest insect;
Illustrious the attribute of speech—the senses—the body;
Illustrious the passing light! Illustrious the pale reflection on the new moon in the western sky!
Illustrious whatever I see, or hear, or touch, to the last.

Good in all,
In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,
In the annual return of the seasons,
In the hilarity of youth,
In the strength and flush of manhood,
In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age,
In the superb vistas of Death.

Wonderful to depart;
Wonderful to be here!
The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent blood!
To breathe the air, how delicious!
To speak! to walk! to seize something by the hand!
To prepare for sleep, for bed—to look on my rose-color'd flesh;
To be conscious of my body, so satisfied,[1] so large;
To be this incredible God I am;
To have gone forth among other Gods—these men and women I love.

Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself!
How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!
How the clouds pass silently overhead!

[1] 1860. For "satisfied" reads "amours." "Songs Before Parting" reads "happy."

How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon, stars, dart on and on!
How the water sports and sings! (Surely it is alive!)
How the trees rise and stand up—with strong trunks—with branches and leaves!
(Surely there is something more in each of the trees—some living Soul.)

O amazement of things! even the least particle!
O spirituality of things!
O strain musical, flowing through ages and continents—now reaching me and America!
I take your strong chords—I intersperse them, and cheerfully pass them forward.

I too carol the sun, usher'd, or at noon, or, as now, setting,
I too throb to the brain and beauty of the earth, and of all the growths of the earth,
I too have felt the resistless call of myself.

As I sail'd down the Mississippi,
As I wander'd over the prairies,
As I have lived—As I have look'd through my windows, my eyes,
As I went forth in the morning—As I beheld the light breaking in the east;
As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern Sea, and again on the beach of the Western Sea;
As I roam'd the streets of inland Chicago—whatever streets I have roam'd;
Or cities, or silent woods, or peace, or even amid the sights of war;[1]
Wherever I have been, I have charged myself with contentment and triumph.

I sing the Equalities, modern or old,[2]
I sing the endless finales of things;
I say Nature continues—Glory continues;
I praise with electric voice;
For I do not see one imperfection in the universe;
And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in the universe.

[1] Line 51 added in 1870.
[2] "modern or old" added in 1870.

O setting sun! though the time has come,[1]
I still warble under you, if none else does, unmitigated adoration.

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

When I heard the learn'd astronomer;
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;
When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them;
When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

TO RICH GIVERS.

First published in 1860.

What you give me, I cheerfully accept,
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money—these, as I rendezvous with my poems;
A traveler's lodging and breakfast as I journey through The States—Why should I be ashamed to own such gifts? Why to advertise for them?
For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman;
For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe.[2]

SO LONG!

First published in 1860.

I

To conclude—I announce what comes after me;[3]

[1] 1860 reads "O when the time comes."

[2] 1860 reads "For I know that what I bestow upon any man or woman is no less than the entrance," etc.

[3] After line 1, 1860 reads "The thought must be promulged, that all I know at any time suffices for that time only—not subsequent time."

I announce mightier[1] offspring, orators, days, and then, for the present,[2] depart.

I remember I said, before my leaves sprang at all,[3]
I would raise my voice jocund and strong, with reference to consummations.

When America does what was promis'd,[4]
When there are plentiful athletic bards, inland and seaboard,
When through These States walk a hundred millions of superb persons,
When the rest part away for superb persons, and contribute to them,[5]
When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,
Then to me and mine our due fruition.

I have press'd through in my own right,
I have sung the Body and the Soul—War and Peace have I sung,
And the songs of Life and of Birth—and shown that there are many births:[6]
I have offer'd my style to every one—I have journey'd with confident step;

[1] 1860 for "mightier" reads "greater."
[2] "for the present" added in 1870.
[3] 1860 reads "I remember I said to myself at the winter close, before my leaves sprang at all, that I would become a candid and unloosed summer-poet."
[4] After line 5, 1860 reads:
"When each part is peopled with free people,
When there is no city on earth to lead my city, the city of young men, the Mannahatta city—But when the Mannahatta leads all the cities of the earth."
[5] After line 8, 1860 reads:
"When fathers, firm, unconstrained, open-eyed—When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,
Then to me ripeness and conclusion.

Yet not me, after all—let none be content with me,
I myself seek a man better than I am, or a woman better than I am,
I invite defiance, and to make myself superseded,
All I have done, I would cheerfully give to be trod under foot, if it might only be the soil of superior poems.

I have established nothing for good,
I have but established these things, till things farther onward shall be prepared to be established,
And I am myself the preparer of things farther onward."
[6] Lines 12–13 added in 1870.

While my pleasure is yet at the full, I whisper, *So long!*
And take the young woman's hand, and the young man's hand, for the last time.[1]

2

I announce natural persons to arise;
I announce justice triumphant;
I announce uncompromising liberty and equality;
I announce the justification of candor, and the justification of pride.

I announce that the identity of These States is a single identity only;
I announce the Union more and more compact, indissoluble;[2]
I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous politics of the earth insignificant.

I announce adhesiveness—I say it shall be limitless, unloosen'd;
I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for.

I announce a man or woman coming—perhaps you are the one, (*So long!*)[3]
I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste, affectionate, compassionate, fully armed.

[1] After line 16, 1860 adds:
"Once more I enforce you to give play to yourself—and not depend on me, or on any one but yourself,
Once more I proclaim the whole of America for each individual, without exception.

As I have announced the true theory of the youth, manhood, womanhood, of The States, I adhere to it;
As I have announced myself on immortality, the body, procreation, hauteur, prudence,
As I joined the stern crowd that still confronts the President with menacing weapons—I adhere to all,
As I have announced each age for itself, this moment I set the example.

I demand the choicest edifices to destroy them;
Room! room! for new far-planning draughtsmen and engineers!
Clear that rubbish from the building-spots and the paths!

So long!"

[2] "indissoluble" added in 1870.

[3] "(So long!)" begins line in 1860.

I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual, bold ;[1]
I announce an end[2] that shall lightly and joyfully meet its translation ;
I announce myriads of youths, beautiful, gigantic, sweet-blooded ;
I announce a race of splendid and savage old men.[3]

3

O thicker and faster ! (*So long !*)[4]
O crowding too close upon me ;
I foresee too much—it means more than I thought ;
It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat, and sound your last ![5]
Salute me—salute the days[6] once more. Peal the old cry once more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,
At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,
Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,
Curious envelop'd messages delivering,
Sparkles hot, seed ethereal, down in the dirt dropping,
Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it never daring,
To ages, and ages yet, the growth of the seed leaving,
To troops out of me, out of the army, the war arising[7]—they the tasks I have set promulging,
To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing—their affection me more clearly explaining,
To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—I the muscle of their brains trying,
So I pass—a little time vocal, visible, contrary ;
Afterward, a melodious echo, passionately bent for—(death making me really[8] undying ;)

[1] Line begins "*So long*" in 1860.
[2] 1860 for "an end" reads "an old age."
[3] Lines 30–31 added in 1870.
[4] "(So long !)" added in 1867.
[5] 1860 reads "Now throat, sound your last !"
[6] 1860 for "days" reads "future."
[7] "out of the army, the war arising" added in 1870.
[8] "really" added in 1867.

The best of me then when no longer visible—for toward that I have been incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause, and crouch extended with unshut mouth?
Is there a single final farewell?

4

My songs cease—I abandon them;
From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally, solely[1] to you.

Camerado![2] This is no book;
Who touches this, touches a man;
(Is it night? Are we here alone?)
It is I you hold, and who holds you;
I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me forth.

O how your fingers drowse me!
Your breath falls around me like dew—your pulse lulls the tympans of my ears;
I feel immerged from head to foot;
Delicious—enough.

Enough, O deed impromptu and secret!
Enough, O gliding present! Enough, O summ'd-up past!

5

Dear friend, whoever you are, take this kiss,
I give it especially to you—Do not forget me;
I feel like one who has done work for the day, to retire awhile;[3]
I receive now again of my many translations—from my avataras ascending—while others doubtless await me;[4]
An unknown sphere, more real than I dream'd, more direct, darts awakening rays about me—*So long!*
Remember my words—I may again return,[5]
I love you—I depart from materials;
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.

[1] "solely" added in 1867.
[2] "Camerado!" added in 1867.
[3] 1860 reads "I feel like one who has done his work—I progress on." 1867 adds "(Long enough have I dallied with life.)"
[4] Line 70 added in 1870.
[5] "I may again return" added in 1870.

PASSAGE TO INDIA.

First published in 1870.

1

Singing my days,
Singing the great achievements of the present,
Singing the strong, light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)
In the Old World, the east, the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent, gentle wires,
I sound, to commence, the cry, with thee, O soul,
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past! the dark, unfathom'd retrospect!
The teeming gulf! the sleepers and the shadows!
The past! the infinite greatness of the past!
For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past?
(As a projectile, form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still keeps on,
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

2

Passage, O soul, to India!
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic—the primitive fables.

Not you alone, proud truths of the world!
Nor you alone, ye facts of modern science!
But myths and fables of eld—Asia's, Africa's fables!
The far-darting beams of the spirit!—the unloos'd dreams!
The deep diving bibles and legends;
The daring plots of the poets—the elder religions;
—O you temples fairer than lilies, pour'd over by the rising sun!
O you fables, spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known, mounting to heaven!
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, burnish'd with gold!

Towers of fables immortal, fashion'd from mortal dreams!
You too I welcome, and fully, the same as the rest;
You too with joy I sing.

3

Passage to India!
Lo, soul! seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by net-work,
The people to become brothers and sisters,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together.

(A worship new, I sing;
You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours!
You engineers! you architects, machinists, yours!
You, not for trade or transportation only,
But in God's name, and for thy sake, O soul.)

4

Passage to India!
Lo, soul, for thee, of tableaus twain,
I see, in one, the Suez canal initiated, open'd,
I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Eugenie's leading the van;
I mark, from on deck, the strange landscape, the pure sky, the level sand in the distance;
I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen gather'd,
The gigantic dredging machines.

In one, again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the same,)
I see over my own continent the Pacific Railroad, surmounting every barrier;
I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte, carrying freight and passengers;
I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill steam-whistle,
I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world;
I cross the Laramie plains—I note the rocks in grotesque shapes—the buttes;
I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions—the barren, colorless, sage-deserts;

I see in glimpses afar, or towering immediately above me, the great mountains—I see the Wind River and the Wahsatch mountains;
I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest—I pass the Promontory—I ascend the Nevadas;
I scan the noble Elk mountain, and wind around its base;
I see the Humboldt range—I thread the valley and cross the river,
I see the clear waters of Lake Tahoe—I see forests of majestic pines,
Or, crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold enchanting mirages of waters and meadows;
Marking through these, and after all, in duplicate slender lines,
Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,
The road between Europe and Asia.

(Ah Genoese, thy dream! thy dream!
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream!)

5

Passage to India!
Struggles of many a captain—tales of many a sailor dead!
Over my mood, stealing and spreading they come,
Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the surface rising,
A ceaseless thought, a varied train—Lo, soul! to thee, thy sight, they rise,
The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions:
Again Vasco de Gama sails forth;
Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,
Lands found, and nations born—thou born, America, (a hemisphere unborn,)
For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
Thou, rondure of the world, at last accomplish'd.

6

O, vast Rondure, swimming in space!
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty!

Alternate light and day, and the teeming, spiritual darkness ;
Unspeakable, high processions of sun and moon, and countless stars, above ;
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees ;
With inscrutable purpose—some hidden, prophetic intention ;
Now, first, it seems, my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia, descending, radiating,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, curious—with restless explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish—with never-happy hearts,
With that sad, incessant refrain, *Wherefore, unsatisfied Soul?* and *Whither, O mocking Life?*

Ah, who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive Earth?
Who bind it to us? What is this separate Nature, so unnatural?
What is this Earth, to our affections? (unloving earth, without a throb to answer ours ;
Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet, soul, be sure the first intent remains—and shall be carried out ;
(Perhaps even now the time has arrived.)

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors—after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the Poet, worthy that name ;
The true Son of God shall come, singing his songs.

Then, not your deeds only, O voyagers, O scientists and inventors, shall be justified,
All these hearts, as of fretted children, shall be sooth'd,
All affection shall be fully responded to—the secret shall be told ;
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up, and hook'd and link'd together ;
The whole Earth—this cold, impassive, voiceless Earth, shall be completely justified ;

Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted
by the true Son of God, the poet,
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains,
He shall double the Cape of Good Hope to some purpose;)
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
The true Son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

7

Year at whose open'd, wide-flung door I sing!
Year of the purpose accomplish'd!
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!
(No mere Doge of Venice now, wedding the Adriatic;)
I see, O year, in you, the vast terraqueous globe, given, and
giving all,
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World;
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival
garland,
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

8

Passage to India!
Cooling airs from Caucasus far, soothing cradle of man,
The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again.

Lo, soul, the retrospect, brought forward;
The old, most populous, wealthiest of Earth's lands,
The streams of the Indus and the Ganges, and their many affluents;
(I, my shores of America walking to-day, behold, resuming
all,)
The tale of Alexander, on his warlike marches, suddenly dying,
On one side China, and on the other side Persia and Arabia,
To the south the great seas, and the Bay of Bengal;
The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,
Old occult Brahma, interminably far back—the tender and
junior Buddha,
Central and southern empires, and all their belongings, possessors,
The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,
The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians, Byzantium,
the Arabs, Portuguese,
The first travelers, famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the
Moor,

Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be fill'd,
The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,
Thyself, O soul, that will not brook a challenge.

9

The medieval navigators rise before me,
The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise;
Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the earth in spring,
The sunset splendor of chivalry declining.

And who art thou, sad shade?
Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,
With majestic limbs, and pious, beaming eyes,
Spreading around, with every look of thine, a golden world,
Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,
Down to the footlights walks, in some great scena,
Dominating the rest, I see the Admiral himself,
(History's type of courage, action, faith;)
Behold him sail from Palos, leading his little fleet;
His vóyage behold—his return—his great fame,
His misfortunes, calumniators—behold him a prisoner, chain'd,
Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious, in time, I stand, noting the efforts of heroes;
Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death?
Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? Lo! to God's due occasion,
Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,
And fills the earth with use and beauty.)

10

Passage indeed, O soul, to primal thought!
Not lands and seas alone—thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom;
To realms of budding bibles.

O soul, repressless, I with thee, and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin;
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,

To reason's early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair Creation.

11

O we can wait no longer!
We too take ship, O soul!
Joyous, we too launch out on trackless seas!
Fearless, for unknown shores, on waves of extasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul,)
Caroling free—singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

With laugh, and many a kiss,
(Let others deprecate—let others weep for sin, remorse, humiliation;)
O soul, thou pleasest me—I thee.

Ah, more than any priest, O soul, we too believe in God;
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul, thou pleasest me—I thee;
Sailing these seas, or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time, and Space, and Death, like waters flowing,
Bear me, indeed, as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear—lave me all over;
Bathe me, O God, in thee—mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendant!
Nameless—the fibre and the breath!
Light of the light—shedding forth universes—thou centre of them!
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving!
Thou moral, spiritual fountain! affection's source! thou reservoir!
(O pensive soul of me! O thirst unsatisfied! waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us, somewhere there, the Comrade perfect?)
Thou pulse! thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,

That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space!
How should I think—how breathe a single breath—how speak
—if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee, O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo! thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full, the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding, O soul, thou journeyest forth;
—What love, than thine and ours could wider amplify?
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours, O soul?
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection, strength?
What cheerful willingness, for others' sake, to give up all?
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
(The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,)
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
As, fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

12

Passage to more than India!
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
O Soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like these?
Disportest thou on waters such as these?
Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas?
Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!
Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!
You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never reach'd you.

13

Passage to more than India!
O secret of the earth and sky!

Of you, O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!
Of you, O woods and fields! Of you, strong mountains of my land!
Of you, O prairies! Of you, gray rocks!
O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!
O day and night, passage to you!

O sun and moon, and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter!
Passage to you!

Passage—immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!
Away, O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not grovell'd here long enough, eating and drinking like mere brutes?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough?

Sail forth! steer for the deep waters only!
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me;
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!

THOUGHT.

First published in 1860.

As I sit with others, at a great feast, suddenly, while the music is playing,
To my mind, (whence it comes I know not,) spectral, in mist, of a wreck at sea;
Of certain ships—how they sail from port with flying streamers, and wafted kisses—and that is the last of them!
Of the solemn and murky mystery about the fate of the President;[1]

[1] Lines 3–4 added in 1870.

Of the flower of the marine science of fifty generations, founder'd off the Northeast coast, and going down—Of the steamship Arctic going down,
Of the veil'd tableau—Women gather'd together on deck, pale, heroic, waiting the moment that draws so close—O the moment!
A huge sob—A few bubbles—the white foam spirting up—And then the women gone,
Sinking there, while the passionless wet flows on—And I now pondering, Are those women indeed gone?
Are Souls drown'd and destroy'd so?
Is only matter triumphant?

O LIVING ALWAYS—ALWAYS DYING!

First published in 1860 where poem begins "O Love! O dying—always dying!"

O LIVING always—always dying!
O the burials of me, past and present!
O me, while I stride ahead, material, visible, imperious as ever!
O me, what I was for years, now dead, (I lament not—I am content;)
O to disengage myself from those corpses of me, which I turn and look at, where I cast them!
To pass on, (O living! always living!) and leave the corpses behind!

PROUD MUSIC OF THE STORM.

First published in 1870.

I

PROUD music of the storm!
Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies!
Strong hum of forest tree-tops! Wind of the mountains!
Personified dim shapes! you hidden orchestras!
You serenades of phantoms, with instruments alert,
Blending, with Nature's rhythmus, all the tongues of nations;
You chords left us by vast composers! you choruses!
You formless, free, religious dances! you from the Orient!

You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts;
You sounds from distant guns, with galloping cavalry!
Echoes of camps, with all the different bugle-calls!
Trooping tumultuous, filling the midnight late, bending me powerless,
Entering my lonesome slumber-chamber—Why have you seiz'd me?

2

Come forward, O my Soul, and let the rest retire;
Listen—lose not—it is toward thee they tend;
Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber,
For thee they sing and dance, O Soul.

A festival song!
The duet of the bridegroom and the bride—a marriage-march,
With lips of love, and hearts of lovers, fill'd to the brim with love;
The red-flush'd cheeks, and perfumes—the cortege swarming, full of friendly faces, young and old,
To flutes' clear notes, and sounding harps' cantabile.

3

Now loud approaching drums!
Victoria! see'st thou in powder-smoke the banners torn but flying? the rout of the baffled?
Hearest those shouts of a conquering army?

(Ah, Soul, the sobs of women—the wounded groaning in agony,
The hiss and crackle of flames—the blacken'd ruins—the embers of cities,
The dirge and desolation of mankind.)

4

Now airs antique and medieval fill me!
I see and hear old harpers with their harps, at Welsh festivals:
I hear the minnesingers, singing their lays of love,
I hear the minstrels, gleemen, troubadours, of the feudal ages.

5

Now the great organ sounds,
Tremulous—while underneath, (as the hid footholds of the earth,

On which arising, rest, and leaping forth, depend,
All shapes of beauty, grace and strength—all hues we know,
Green blades of grass, and warbling birds—children that gambol and play—the clouds of heaven above,)
The strong base stands, and its pulsations intermits not,
Bathing, supporting, merging all the rest—maternity of all the rest;
And with it every instrument in multitudes,
The players playing—all the world's musicians,
The solemn hymns and masses, rousing adoration,
All passionate heart-chants, sorrowful appeals,
The measureless sweet vocalists of ages,
And for their solvent setting, Earth's own diapason,
Of winds and woods and mighty ocean waves;
A new composite orchestra—binder of years and climes—ten-fold renewer,
As of the far-back days the poets tell—the Paradiso,
The straying thence, the separation long, but now the wandering done,
The journey done, the Journeyman come home,
And Man and Art, with Nature fused again.

6

Tutti! for Earth and Heaven!
The Almighty Leader now for me, for once has signal'd with his wand.

The manly strophe of the husbands of the world,
And all the wives responding.

The tongues of violins!
(I think, O tongues, ye tell this heart, that cannot tell itself;
This brooding, yearning heart, that cannot tell itself.)

7

Ah, from a little child,
Thou knowest, Soul, how to me all sounds became music;
My mother's voice, in lullaby or hymn;
(The voice—O tender voices—memory's loving voices!
Last miracle of all—O dearest mother's, sister's, voices;)
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-leav'd corn,
The measur'd sea-surf, beating on the sand,

The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,
The wild-fowl's notes at night, as flying low, migrating north or south,
The psalm in the country church, or mid the clustering trees, the open air camp-meeting,
The fiddler in the tavern—the glee, the long-strung sailor-song,
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep—the crowing cock at dawn.

8

All songs of current lands come sounding 'round me,
The German airs of friendship, wine and love,
Irish ballads, merry jigs and dances—English warbles,
Chansons of France, Scotch tunes—and o'er the rest,
Italia's peerless compositions.

Across the stage, with pallor on her face, yet lurid passion,
Stalks Norma, brandishing the dagger in her hand.

I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam ;
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevell'd.

I see where Ernani, walking the bridal garden,
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride by the hand,
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.

To crossing swords, and grey hairs bared to heaven,
The clear, electric base and baritone of the world,
The trombone duo—Libertad forever !

From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,
By old and heavy convent walls, a wailing song,
Song of lost love—the torch of youth and life quench'd in despair,
Song of the dying swan—Fernando's heart is breaking.

Awaking from her woes at last, retriev'd Amina sings ;
Copious as stars, and glad as morning light, the torrents of her joy.

(The teeming lady comes !
The lustrious orb—Venus contralto—the blooming mother,
Sister of loftiest gods—Alboni's self I hear.)

9

I hear those odes, symphonies, operas;
I hear in the *William Tell*, the music of an arous'd and angry people;
I hear Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, the *Prophet*, or *Robert;*
Gounod's *Faust*, or Mozart's *Don Juan.*

10

I hear the dance-music of all nations,
The waltz, (some delicious measure, lapsing, bathing me in bliss;)
The bolero, to tinkling guitars and clattering castanets.

I see religious dances old and new,
I hear the sound of the Hebrew lyre,
I see the Crusaders marching, bearing the cross on high, to the martial clang of cymbals;
I hear dervishes monotonously chanting, interspers'd with frantic shouts, as they spin around, turning always towards Mecca;
I see the rapt religious dances of the Persians and the Arabs;
Again, at Eleusis, home of Ceres, I see the modern Greeks dancing,
I hear them clapping their hands, as they bend their bodies,
I hear the metrical shuffling of their feet.

I see again the wild old Corybantian dance, the performers wounding each other;
I see the Roman youth, to the shrill sound of flageolets, throwing and catching their weapons,
As they fall on their knees, and rise again.

I hear from the Mussulman mosque the muezzin calling;
I see the worshippers within, (nor form, nor sermon, argument, nor word,
But silent, strange, devout—rais'd, glowing heads—extatic faces.)

11

I hear the Egyptian harp of many strings,
The primitive chants of the Nile boatmen;
The sacred imperial hymns of China,

To the delicate sounds of the king, (the stricken wood and stone ;)
Or to Hindu flutes, and the fretting twang of the vina,
A band of bayaderes.

12

Now Asia, Africa leave me—Europe, seizing, inflates me ;
To organs huge, and bands, I hear as from vast concourses of voices,
Luther's strong hymn, *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott ;*
Rossini's *Stabat Mater dolorosa ;*
Or, floating in some high cathedral dim, with gorgeous color'd windows,
The passionate *Agnus Dei*, or *Gloria in Excelsis*.

13

Composers ! mighty maestros !
And you, sweet singers of old lands—Soprani ! Tenori ! Bassi !
To you a new bard, carolling free in the west,
Obeisant, sends his love.

(Such led to thee, O Soul !
All senses, shows and objects, lead to thee,
But now, it seems to me, sound leads o'er all the rest.)

14

I hear the annual singing of the children in St. Paul's Cathedral ;
Or, under the high roof of some colossal hall, the symphonies, oratorios of Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn ;
The *Creation*, in billows of godhood laves me.

Give me to hold all sounds, (I, madly struggling, cry,)
Fill me with all the voices of the universe,
Endow me with their throbbings—Nature's also,
The tempests, waters, winds—operas and chants—marches and dances,
Utter—pour in—for I would take them all.

15

Then I woke softly,
And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,
And questioning all those reminiscences—the tempest in its fury,
And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,

And those rapt oriental dances, of religious fervor,
And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of organs,
And all the artless plaints of love, and grief and death,
I said to my silent, curious Soul, out of the bed of the slumber-chamber,
Come, for I have found the clue I sought so long,
Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,
Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,
Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,
Haply, what thou hast heard, O Soul, was not the sound of winds,
Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings, nor harsh scream,
Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,
Nor German organ majestic—nor vast concourse of voices—nor layers of harmonies;
Nor strophes of husbands and wives—nor sound of marching soldiers,
Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-calls of camps;
But, to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,
Poems, bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted in night air, uncaught, unwritten,
Which, let us go forth in the bold day, and write.

ASHES OF SOLDIERS.

Again a verse for sake of you,
You soldiers in the ranks—you Volunteers,
Who bravely fighting, silent fell,
To fill unmention'd graves.

ASHES OF SOLDIERS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865, under title of "Hymn of Dead Soldiers."

Ashes of soldiers!
As I muse, retrospective, murmuring a chant in thought,
Lo! the war resumes—again to my sense your shapes,
And again the advance of armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapors,
From their graves in the trenches ascending,
From the cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,
From every point of the compass, out of the countless unnamed graves,
In wafted clouds, in myraids large, or squads of twos or threes, or single ones, they come,
And silently gather round me.

Now sound no note, O trumpeters![1]
Not at the head of my cavalry, parading on spirited horses,
With sabres drawn and glist'ning, and carbines by their thighs —(ah, my brave horsemen!
My handsome, tan-faced horsemen! what life, what joy and pride,
With all the perils, were yours!)

Nor you drummers—neither at reveille, at dawn,
Nor the long roll alarming the camp—nor even the muffled beat for a burial;
Nothing from you, this time, O drummers, bearing my warlike drums.

But aside from these, and the marts of wealth, and the crowded promenade,[2]
Admitting around me comrades close, unseen by the rest, and voiceless,
The slain elate and alive again—the dust and debris alive,[3]
I chant this chant of my silent soul, in the name of all dead soldiers.

Faces so pale, with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather closer yet;
Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost![4]
Invisible to the rest, henceforth become my companions!
Follow me ever! desert me not, while I live.

[1] Introduction and lines 1–11 added in 1870. Drum-Taps reads:
"One breath, O my silent soul,
A perfum'd thought—no more I ask for the sake of all dead soldiers.
Buglers off in my armies!
At present I ask not you to sound." Then follows line 12.

[2] Drum-Taps reads "But aside from these, and the crowd's hurrahs and the land's congratulations."

[3] Line 21 added in 1870.

[4] Drum-Taps reads "Phantoms, welcome, divine and tender."

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living! sweet are the musical voices sounding!
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead, with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades! all is over and long gone;[1]
But love is not over—and what love, O comrades!
Perfume from battle-fields rising—up from fœtor arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love! immortal Love!
Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with tender pride![2]

Perfume all! make all wholesome!
Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,[3]
O love! O chant! solve all, fructify all[4] with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless—make me a fountain,
That I exhale love from me wherever I go, like a moist perennial dew,[5]
For the ashes of all dead soldiers.

IN MIDNIGHT SLEEP.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865–6, under title of "In Clouds Descending, in Midnight Sleep."

1

In midnight sleep, of many a face of anguish,[6]
Of the look at first of the mortally wounded—of that indescribable look;
Of the dead on their backs, with arms extended wide,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

2

Of scenes of nature, fields and mountains;
Of skies, so beauteous after a storm—and at night the moon so unearthly bright,

[1] Drum-Taps reads "Dearest comrades! all is now over."
[2] Line 35 added in 1870.
[3] Line 37 added in 1870.
[4] "fructify all" added in 1870.
[5] "like a moist perennial dew" added in 1870.
[6] Lilacs reads "In clouds descending, in midnight sleep," etc.

Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the trenches and gather the heaps,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

3

Long, long have they pass'd[1]—faces and trenches and fields;
Where through the carnage I moved with a callous composure—or away from the fallen,
Onward I sped at the time—But now of their forms at night,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

CAMPS OF GREEN.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Not alone those camps of white, O soldiers,
When, as order'd forward, after a long march,
Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessen'd, we halted for the night;
Some of us so fatigued, carrying the gun and knapsack, dropping asleep in our tracks;
Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up began to sparkle;
Outposts of pickets posted, surrounding, alert through the dark,
And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety;
Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating the drums,
We rose up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and resumed our journey,
Or proceeded to battle.

Lo! the camps of the tents of green,
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war keep filling,
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? is it too only halting awhile,
Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green—in their tents dotting the world;
In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them—in the old and young,

[1] Lilacs reads "Long have they pass'd, long lapsed—faces," etc.

Sleeping under the twilight, sleeping under the moonlight, content and silent there at last,
Behold the mighty bivouac-field, and waiting-camp of all,[1]
Of corps and generals all, and the President over the corps and generals all,
And of each of us, O soldiers, and of each and all in the ranks we fought,
(There without hatred we shall all meet.)

For presently, O soldiers, we too camp in our place in the bivouac-camps of green;
But we need not provide for outposts, nor word for the countersign,
Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865, under title of "Do You Ask Dulcet Rhymes From Me?"

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes?
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?[2]
Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to understand
—nor am I now;
(I have been born of the same as the war was born:
The drum-corps' harsh rattle is to me sweet music—I love well the martial dirge,
With slow wail, and convulsive throb, leading the officer's funeral:)[4]
—What to such as you, anyhow, such a poet as I?—therefore leave my works,
And go lull yourself with what you can understand—and with piano-tunes;[5]
For I lull nobody—and you will never understand me.

[1] Drum-Taps reads "of us and ours and all."
[2] Line 2 added in 1870.
[3] Drum-Taps adds "to understand?"
[4] Lines 5–6–7 added in 1870.
[5] "and with piano-tunes" added in 1870.

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING, I HEARD THE MOTHER OF ALL.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Pensive, on her dead gazing, I heard the Mother of All,
Desperate, on the torn bodies, on the forms covering the battle-fields gazing;
(As the last gun ceased—but the scent of the powder-smoke linger'd;)[1]
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while she stalk'd:
Absorb them well, O my earth, she cried—I charge you, lose not my sons! lose not an atom;
And you streams, absorb them well, taking their dear blood;
And you local spots, and you airs that swim above lightly,
And all you essences of soil and growth—and you, my rivers' depths;
And you, mountain sides—and the woods where my dear children's blood, trickling, redden'd;
And you trees, down in your roots, to bequeath to all future trees,
My dead absorb—my young men's beautiful bodies absorb—and their precious, precious, precious blood;
Which holding in trust for me, faithfully back again give me, many a year hence,
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries hence;
In blowing airs from the fields, back again give me my darlings—give my immortal heroes;
Exhale me them centuries hence—breathe me their breath—let not an atom be lost;
O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an aroma sweet!
Exhale them perennial, sweet death, years, centuries hence.

[1] Line 3 added in 1870.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S BURIAL HYMN.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOOR-YARD BLOOM'D.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

1

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd—and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;
Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful, western, fallen star!
O shades of night! O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd! O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless! O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud, that will not free my soul!

3

In the door-yard fronting an old farm-house, near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom, rising, delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle . . . . . and from this bush in the door-yard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms, and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig, with its flower, I break.

4

In the swamp, in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary, the thrush,
The hermit, withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat!
Death's outlet song of life—(for well, dear brother, I know
If thou wast not gifted to sing, thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes, and through old woods, (where lately the violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris;)
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes—passing the endless grass;
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown fields uprising;
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards;
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night, with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags, with the cities draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves, as of crape-veil'd women, standing,
With processions long and winding, and the flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit—with the silent sea of faces, and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn;
With all the mournful voices of the dirges, pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—Where amid these you journey,
With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang;
Here! coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one, alone;
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring:
For fresh as the morning—thus would I carol a song for you, O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death! I cover you over with roses and early lilies;
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious, I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes;
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you, and the coffins all of you, O death.)

8

O western orb, sailing the heaven!
Now I know what you must have meant, as a month since we walk'd,
As we walk'd up and down in the dark blue so mystic,
As we walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell, as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down, as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on;)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something, I know not what, kept me from sleep;)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west, ere you went, how full you were of woe;
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze, in the cold transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul, in its trouble, dissatisfied, sank, as where you, sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on, there in the swamp!
O singer bashful and tender! I hear your notes—I hear your call;
I hear—I come presently—I understand you;
But a moment I linger—for the lustrous star has detain'd me;
The star, my departing comrade,[1] holds and detains me.

[1] Lilacs reads "my comrade departing."

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be, for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds, blown from east and west,
Blown from the eastern sea, and blown from the western sea, till there on the prairies meeting:
These, and with these, and the breath of my chant,
I perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring, and farms, and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air;
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific;
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there;
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows;
And the city at hand, with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life, and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

12

Lo! body and soul! this land!
Mighty Manhattan, with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships;
The varied and ample land—the South and the North in the light—Ohio's shores, and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies, cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo! the most excellent sun, so calm and haughty;
The violet and purple morn, with just-felt breezes;

The gentle, soft-born, measureless light;
The miracle, spreading, bathing all—the fulfill'd noon;
The coming eve, delicious—the welcome night, and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on! sing on, you gray-brown bird!
Sing from the swamps, the recesses—pour your chant from the bushes;
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on, dearest brother—warble your reedy song;
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid, and free, and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul! O wondrous singer!
You only I hear . . . . . yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart;)
Yet the lilac, with mastering odor, holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day, and look'd forth,
In the close of the day, with its light, and the fields of spring, and the farmer preparing his crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land, with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds, and the storms;)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides,—and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of daily usages;
And the streets, how their throbbings throbb'd, and the cities pent—lo! then and there,
Falling upon them all, and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail;
And I knew Death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

15

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle, as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night, that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars, and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me;
The gray-brown bird I know, receiv'd us comrades three;
And he sang what seem'd the carol[1] of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars, and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol[2] of the bird.

And the charm of the carol[3] rapt me,
As I held, as if by their hands, my comrades in the night;
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

DEATH CAROL.

16

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love—But praise! praise! praise![4]
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.

Dark Mother, always gliding near, with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?

[1] Lilacs for "carol" reads "song."
[2] Lilacs for "carol" reads "surging."
[3] Lilacs for "carol" reads "surging."
[4] Lilacs reads "But praise! O praise and praise."

Then I chant it for thee—I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach,[1] *strong Deliveress!*
When it is so—when thou hast taken them, I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee—adornments and feastings for thee;
And the sights of the open landscape, and the high-spread sky, are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night, in silence, under many a star;
The ocean shore, and the husky whispering wave, whose voice I know;
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves—over the myriad fields, and the prairies wide;
Over the dense-pack'd cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!

17

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure, deliberate notes, spreading, filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist, and the swamp-perfume;
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

[2] Lilacs reads "Approach, encompassing Death—strong Deliveress!"

18

I saw askant the armies ;[1]
And I saw, as in noiseless dreams, hundreds of battle-flags ;
Borne through the smoke of the battles, and pierc'd with missiles, I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody ;
And at last but a few shreds[2] left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men—I saw them ;
I saw the debris and debris of all the dead soldiers of the war ;[3]
But I saw they were not as was thought ;
They themselves were fully at rest—they suffer'd not ;
The living remain'd and suffer'd—the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child, and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

19

Passing the visions, passing the night ;
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands ;
Passing the song of the hermit bird, and the tallying song of my soul,
(Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying, ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth, and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,)
Passing, I leave thee,[4] lilac with heart-shaped leaves ;
I leave thee[5] there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.

[1] Lilacs reads "I saw the vision of armies."
[2] Lilacs reads "shreds of the flags left," etc.
[3] "of the war" added in 1870.
[4] Lilacs reads "Must I leave thee," etc.
[5] Lilacs reads "Must I leave thee," etc.

I cease from my song for thee ;[1]
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous, with silver face in the night.

20

Yet each I keep, and all, retrievements out of the night ;[2]
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,[3] 200
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,[4]
With the lustrous and drooping star, with the countenance full of woe,
With the lilac tall, and its blossoms of mastering odor ;
With the holders holding my hand, nearing the call of the bird,[5]
Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I keep—for the dead I loved so well ;
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands . . . and this for his dear sake ;
Lilac and star and bird, twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines, and the cedars dusk and dim.

O CAPTAIN ! MY CAPTAIN !

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

1

O Captain ! my Captain ! our fearful trip is done ;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won ;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring :
But O heart ! heart ! heart !
O the bleeding drops of red,[6]
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

[1] Lilacs reads "Must I pass from my song for thee."
[2] "retrievements out of the night" added in 1870.
[3] 1870 adds "I keep."
[4] 1870 adds "I keep."
[5] Line 204 in "Lilacs" is next to the last line.
[6] Lilacs reads "Leave you not the little spot."

2

O Captain ! my Captain ! rise up and hear the bells ;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills ;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores
a-crowding ;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning ;
Here Captain ! dear father !
This arm beneath your head ;[1]
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

3

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still ;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will ;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done ;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won :
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells !
But I, with mournful[2] tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY.

(May 4, 1865.)[3]

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

1

Hush'd be the camps to-day ;
And, soldiers, let us drape our war-worn weapons ;
And each with musing soul retire, to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts ;
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

2

But sing, poet, in our name ;
Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in camps,
know it truly.

[1] Lilacs reads "This arm I push beneath you."
[2] Lilacs. For "mournful" reads "silent."
[3] Added in 1870. 1865 reads "A. L. Buried, April 19, 1865."

As they invault the coffin there;
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,[1]
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN.

First published in 1870.

This dust was once the Man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute—under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of These States.

POEM OF JOYS.

First published in 1860.

I

O to make the[2] most jubilant poem!
Even to set off these, and merge with these, the carols of Death.[3]
O full of music! full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
Full of common employments! full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals! O for the swiftness and balance of fishes!
O for the dropping of rain-drops in a poem!
O for the sunshine, and motion of waves in a poem.[4]

O the joy of my spirit! it is uncaged! it darts like lightning!
It is not enough to have this globe, or a certain time—I will have thousands of globes, and all time.

[1] Drum-Taps reads "Sing, with the shovel'd clods that fill the grave—a verse."
[2] 1860 for "the" reads "a."
[3] Line 2 added in 1870.
[4] After line 7, 1860'67 read "O to be on the sea! the wind, the wide waters around;
O to sail in a ship under full sail at sea."

2

O the engineer's joys!
To go with a locomotive!
To hear the hiss of steam—the merry shriek—the steam-whistle —the laughing locomotive!
To push with resistless way, and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hill-sides!
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds—the moist fresh stillness of the woods,
The exquisite smell of the earth at day-break, and all through the forenoon.[1]

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!
The saddle—the gallop—the pressure upon the seat—the cool gurgling by the ears and hair.

3

O the fireman's joys!
I hear the alarm at dead of night,
I hear bells—shouts!—I pass the crowd—I run!
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the arena, in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the human Soul is capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless floods.

4

O the mother's joys!
The watching—the endurance—the precious love—the anguish —the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation;
The joy of soothing and pacifying—the joy of concord and harmony.

[1] Lines 14–16 in 1860 '67 are placed after line 165, after which 1860 '67 add "O love-branches! love-root! love-apples!
O chaste and electric torrents! O mad-sweet drops."

O to go back to the place where I was born!
To hear the birds sing once more!
To ramble about the house and barn, and over the fields, once more,
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

5

O male and female!
O the presence of women! (I swear there is nothing more exquisite to me than the mere presence of women;)
O for the girl, my mate! O for the happiness with my mate!
O the young man as I pass! O I am sick after the friendship of him who, I fear, is indifferent to me.

O the streets of cities!
The flitting faces—the expressions, eyes, feet, costumes! O I cannot tell how welcome they are to me.[1]

6

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or along the coast!
O to continue and be employ'd there all my life!
O the briny and damp smell—the shore—the salt weeds exposed at low water,
The work of fishermen—the work of the eel-fisher and clam-fisher.

O it is I!
I come with my clam-rake and spade! I come with my eel-spear;
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,
I laugh and work with them—I joke at my work, like a mettlesome young man.

In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out on foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice;
Behold me, well-clothed, going gaily, or returning in the afternoon—my brood of tough boys accompaning me,
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be with no one else so well as they love to be with me,
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

[1] After line 38, 1860 '67 add "O of men—of women toward me as I pass —The memory of only one look—the boy lingering and waiting."

Or, another time, in warm weather, out in a boat, to lift the lobster-pots, where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I know the buoys;)
O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water, as I row, just before sunrise, toward the buoys;
I pull the wicker pots up slantingly—the dark-green lobsters are desperate with their claws, as I take them out—I insert wooden pegs in the joints of their pincers,
I go to all the places, one after another, and then row back to the shore,
There, in a huge kettle of boiling water, the lobsters shall be boil'd till their color becomes scarlet.

Or, another time, mackerel-taking,
Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to fill the water for miles:
Or, another time, fishing for rock-fish, in Chesapeake Bay—I one of the brown-faced crew:
Or, another time, trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand with brâced body,
My left foot is on the gunwale—my right arm throws the coils of slender rope,
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty skiffs, my companions.

7

O boating on the rivers!
The voyage down the Niagara, (the St. Lawrence,)—the superb scenery—the steamers,
The ships sailing—the Thousand Islands—the occasional timber-raft, and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when they cook their supper at evening.

O something pernicious and dread!
Something far away from a puny and pious life!
Something unproved! Something in a trance!
Something escaped from the anchorage, and driving free.

O to work in mines, or forging iron!
Foundry casting—the foundry itself—the rude high roof—the ample and shadow'd space,
The furnace—the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

8

O to resume the joys of the soldier :
To feel the presence of a brave general ! to feel his sympathy !
To behold his calmness ! to be warm'd in the rays of his smile !
To go to battle ! to hear the bugles play, and the drums beat !
To hear the crash of artillery ! to see the glittering of the bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun !
To see men fall and die, and not complain !
To taste the savage taste of blood ! to be so devilish !
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

9

O the whaleman's joys ! O I cruise my old cruise again !
I feel the ship's motion under me—I feel the Atlantic breezes fanning me,
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head—*There—she blows !*
—Again I spring up the rigging, to look with the rest—We see —we descend, wild with excitement,
I leap in the lower'd boat—We row toward our prey, where he lies,
We approach, stealthy and silent—I see the mountainous mass, lethargic, basking,
I see the harpooneer standing up—I see the weapon dart from his vigorous arm :
O swift, again, now, far out in the ocean, the wounded whale, settling, running to windward, tows me ;
—Again I see him rise to breathe—We row close again,
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd in the wound,
Again we back off—I see him settle again—the life is leaving him fast,
As he rises, he spouts blood—I see him swim in circles narrower and narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die ;
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and then falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

10

O the old manhood of me, my joy !
My children and grand-children—my white hair and beard,
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my life.

O the ripen'd joy of womanhood!
O perfect happiness at last!
I am more than eighty years of age—my hair, too, is pure white
—I am the most venerable mother;
How clear is my mind! how all people draw nigh to me!
What attractions are these, beyond any before? what bloom,
more than the bloom of youth?
What beauty is this that descends upon me, and rises out of me?

O the orator's joys!
To inflate the chest—to roll the thunder of the voice out from
the ribs and throat,
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,
To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.[1]

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself—receiving identity
through materials, and loving them—observing characters, and absorbing them;
O my soul, vibrated back to me, from them—from facts, sight,
hearing, touch, my phrenology, reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the like;
The real life of my senses and flesh, transcending my senses and
flesh;
My body, done with materials—my sight, done with my material eyes;
Proved to me this day,[2] beyond cavil, that it is not my material
eyes which finally see,
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts,
embraces, procreates.

11

O the farmer's joys!
Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's,
Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys;
To rise at peep of day, and pass forth nimbly to work,
To plow land in the fall for winter-sown crops,
To plough land in the spring for maize,
To train orchards—to graft the trees—to gather apples in the
fall.

O the pleasure with trees!
The orchard—the forest—the oak, cedar, pine, pekan-tree,
The honey-locust, black-walnut, cottonwood, and magnolia.

[1] Lines 103–6 in 1860 '67 are placed before line 138.
[2] 1860 '67 read "O what is proved to me this day."

12

O Death! the voyage of Death![1]
The[2] beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few moments, for reasons;
Myself,[3] discharging my excrementitious body, to be burn'd, or render'd to powder, or buried,
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,
My voided body, nothing more to me, returning to the purifications, further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

13

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along shore!
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep—to race naked along the shore.

O to realize space!
The plenteousness of all—that there are no bounds;
To emerge, and be of the sky—of the sun and moon, and the flying clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!
Personality—to be servile to none—to defer to none—not to any tyrant, known or unknown,
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,
To look with calm gaze, or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full and sonorous voice, out of a broad chest,
To confront with your personality all the other personalities of the earth.

14[4]

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?
Joys of the dear companions, and of the merry word, and laughing face?
Joys of the glad, light-beaming day—joy of the wide-breath'd games?
Joy of sweet music—joy of the lighted ball-room, and the dancers?

[1] "the voyage of Death!" added in 1870.
[2] 1860 '67 read "O the beautiful," etc.
[3] 1860 '67 read "O that of myself," etc.
[4] Stanzas 14–15–16. Lines 138–150 added in 1870.

Joy of the friendly, plenteous dinner—the strong carouse, and drinking?

15

Yet, O my soul supreme!
Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?
Joys of the free and lonesome heart—the tender, gloomy heart?
Joy of the solitary walk—the spirit bowed yet proud—the suffering and the struggle?
The agonistic throes, the extasies—joys of the solemn musings, day or night?
Joys of the thought of Death—the great spheres Time and Space?
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals—the Divine Wife—the sweet, eternal, perfect Comrade?
Joys all thine own, undying one—joys worthy thee, O Soul.

16

O, while I live, to be the ruler of life—not a slave,
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,
No fumes—no ennui—no more complaints, or scornful criticisms.

O me repellent and ugly!
To these proud laws of the air, the water, and the ground, proving my interior Soul impregnable,
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

O to attract by more than attraction!
How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys none of the rest,
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

17

O joy of suffering!
To struggle against great odds! to meet enemies undaunted!
To be entirely alone with them! to find how much one can stand!
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, death, face to face!
To mount the scaffold! to advance to the muzzles of guns with perfect nonchalance!
To be indeed a God!

18

O, to sail to sea in a ship!
To leave this steady, unendurable land!
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and the houses;
To leave you, O you solid motionless land, and entering a ship,
To sail, and sail, and sail![1]

19

O to have my life henceforth a poem of new[2] joys!
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on,[3]
To be a sailor of the world, bound for all ports,
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun and air,)
A swift and swelling ship, full of rich words—full of joys.

TO THINK OF TIME.

First published in 1855. In 1856 under title of "Burial." In 1860 '67 under title of "Burial Poem."

1

[4]To think of time—of all that retrospection![5]
To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward!

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?

Is to-day nothing? Is the beginningless past nothing?
If the future is nothing, they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east! that men and women were flexible, real, alive! that everything was alive!
To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear our part!
To think that we are now here, and bear our part!

[1] Stanza 18, lines 166–170 added in 1870.
[2] "new" added in 1870.
[3] After line 172, 1860 '67 read "An athlete—full of rich words—full of joys," which ends the poem in those editions.
[4] 1860 '67 begin the Poem "To think of it! To think of time—" etc.
[5] 1855 '60 read "to think through the retrospection."

2

Not a day passes—not a minute or second, without an accouchement!
Not a day passes—not a minute or second, without a corpse!

The dull nights go over, and the dull days also,
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,
The physician, after long putting off, gives the silent and terrible look for an answer,
The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers and sisters are sent for,
Medicines stand unused on the shelf—(the camphor-smell has long pervaded the rooms,)
The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the dying,
The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying,
The breath ceases, and the pulse of the heart ceases,[1]
The corpse stretches[2] on the bed, and the living look upon it,
It is palpable[3] as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eye-sight,
But without eye-sight lingers a different living, and looks curiously on the corpse.

3

To think the thought of Death, merged in the thought of materials![4]
To think that the rivers will flow,[5] and the snow fall, and fruits ripen, and act upon others as upon us now—yet not act upon us!
To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others taking great interest in them—and we taking no[6] interest in them!

To think how eager we are in building our houses!
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent!

[1] In 1855 lines 13–20 each begin with "When."
[2] 1855 reads "Then the corpse-limbs stretch on the bed and the living look upon them."
[3] 1855 reads "They are palpable."
[4] Line 25 added in 1870.
[5] 1855 '56 read "will come to flow."
[6] 1855 for "no" reads "small."

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or seventy or eighty years at most,
I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.)

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—they never cease—they are the burial lines,
He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall surely be buried.

4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,
A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,
Each after his kind:[1]
Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf—posh and ice in the river, half-frozen mud in the streets, a gray, discouraged sky overhead, the short, last daylight of Twelfth-month,
A hearse and stages—other vehicles give place—the funeral of an old Broadway[2] stage-driver, the cortege mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell, the gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living alight, the hearse uncloses,
The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is laid on the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovel'd in,
The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,
A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,
He is decently put away—is there anything more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-looking, able to take his own part, witty, sensitive to a slight, ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty, had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution, died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap, wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen, boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing on you, you loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man behind, good

[1] Lines 34–36 added in 1870.
[2] "Broadway" added in 1856.

day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock, first out, last out, turning-in at night;
To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers—and he there takes no interest in them!

5

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages—to think what account they are through our nights and days!
To think that other working-men will make just as great account of them—yet we make little or no account!

The vulgar and the refined—what you call sin, and what you call goodness—to think how wide a difference!
To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is!
Have you pleasure from looking at the sky? have you pleasure from poems?
Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business? or planning a nomination and election? or with your wife and family?
Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework? or the beautiful maternal cares?
—These also flow onward to others—you and I flow onward,
But in due time, you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops,—to think how engross'd you are!
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops—yet for you, of what avail?

6

What will be, will be well—for what is, is well,
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The sky continues beautiful,
The pleasure of men with women shall never be sated, nor the pleasure of women with men, nor the pleasure from poems,
The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the building of houses—these are not phantasms—they have weight, form, location;

Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none of them phantasms,[1]
The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,[2]
The earth is not an echo—man and his life, and all the things of his life, are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds—you gather certainly and safely around yourself;
Yourself! Yourself! Yourself, forever and ever!

7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father—it is to identify you;
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should be decided;
Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd in you,
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the weft crosses the warp, the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments—the baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming—he waited long, for reasons—he is now housed,
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy—he is one of those that to look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be eluded—it is eternal,
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons—not one iota thereof can be eluded.[3]

[1] 1855 reads "they also are not phantasms."
[2] 1855 for "delusion" reads "apparition."
[3] 1855 '60 read "cannot be eluded."

8

Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,
Northerner goes carried, and Southerner goes carried, and they on the Atlantic side, and they on the Pacific, and they between, and all through the Mississippi country, and all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go—the heroes and good-doers are well,
The known leaders and inventors, and the rich owners and pious and distinguish'd, may be well,
But there is more account than that—there is strict account of all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not nothing,
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,
The common people of Europe are not nothing—the American aborigines are not nothing,[1]
The infected in the immigrant hospital are not nothing—the murderer or mean person is not nothing,
The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing as they go,
The lowest prostitute is not nothing—the mocker of religion is not nothing as he goes.

9

Of and in all these things,[2]
I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor the law of us changed,
I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under the present and past law,
And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the present and past law,
For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is enough.[3]

[1] After line 91, 1855 adds "A zambo or a foreheadless Crowfoot or a Comanche is not nothing."

[2] For line 95, 1855 '56 '60 '67 read "I shall go with the rest—we have satisfaction."

[3] After line 99, 1855 '56 '60 read:
"And I have dreamed that the satisfaction is not so much changed, and that there is no life without satisfaction;
What is the earth? what are body and Soul, without satisfaction?

If otherwise, all came but to ashes of dung,
If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum! for we are betray'd!
Then indeed suspicion of death.[1]

Do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death, I should die now,
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward annihilation?

10

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,
The whole universe indicates that it is good,
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals![2]
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad[3] is just as perfect,
The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the imponderable fluids are perfect;
Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly and surely they yet pass on.[4]

11

[5]I swear I think now that everything without exception[6] has an eternal Soul!

I shall go with the rest,
We cannot be stopped at a given point—that is no satisfaction,
To show us a good thing, or a few good things, for a space of time—that is no satisfaction,
We must have the indestructible breed of the best, regardless of time."

[1] For lines 101–2, 1855 '56 read "If maggots and rats ended us, then suspicion, treachery, death."
[2] 1855 '56 '60 '67 add "How perfect is my soul!"
[3] 1855 for "bad" reads "sin."
[4] 1855 '56 '60 '67 after line 113 read "O my soul! if I realize you I have satisfaction,
Animals and vegetables! if I realize you I have satisfaction,
Laws of the earth and air! if I realize you I have satisfaction.

I cannot define my satisfaction—yet it is so.
I cannot define my life—yet it is so."
[5] 1860 '67 begin stanza 11 "O it comes to me now."
[6] "without exception" added in 1860.

The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have! the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it;
And all preparation is for it! and identity is for it! and life and materials are altogether for it![1]

CHANTING THE SQUARE DEIFIC.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

1

CHANTING the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of the sides;
Out of the old and new—out of the square entirely divine,
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed) . . . from this side JEHOVAH am I,
Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;
Not Time affects me—I am Time, old,[2] modern as any;
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments;
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,
Aged beyond computation—yet ever new—ever with those mighty laws rolling,
Relentless, I forgive no man—whoever sins, dies—I will have that man's life;
Therefore let none expect mercy—Have the seasons, gravitation, the appointed days, mercy?—No more have I;
But as the seasons, and gravitation—and as all the appointed days, that forgive not,
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable, without the least remorse.

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
With gentle hand extended—the mightier God am I,
Foretold by prophets and poets, in their most rapt prophecies and poems;

[1] 1855 '56 read "and life and death are for it." 1860 '67 read "and life and death are altogether for it."
[2] "old" added in 1870.

From this side, lo! the Lord CHRIST gazes—lo! Hermes I—lo!
mine is Hercules' face;
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself;
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and
crucified—and many times shall be again;
All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters'
sake—for the soul's sake;
Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with
the kiss of affection;
For I am affection—I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope,
and all-enclosing Charity;
(Conqueror yet—for before me all the armies and soldiers of the
earth shall yet bow—and all the weapons of war become
impotent:)
With indulgent words, as to children—with fresh and sane words,
mine only;
Young and strong I pass, knowing well I am destin'd myself to
an early death:
But my Charity has no death—my Wisdom dies not, neither
early nor late,
And my sweet Love, bequeath'd here and elsewhere, never dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,
With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of my
heart, proud as any;
Lifted, now and always, against whoever, scorning, assumes to
rule me;
Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with
many wiles,
(Though it was thought I was baffled and dispell'd, and my
wiles done—but that will never be;)
Defiant, I, SATAN, still live—still utter words—in new lands
duly appearing, (and old ones also;)
Permanent here, from my side, warlike, equal with any, real as
any,
Nor time, nor change, shall ever change me or my words.

4

Santa SPIRITA, breather, life,
Beyond the light, lighter than light,

Beyond the flames of hell—joyous, leaping easily above hell;
Beyond Paradise—perfumed solely with mine own perfume;
Including all life on earth—touching, including God—including Saviour and Satan;
Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me, what were all? what were God?)
Essence of forms—life of the real identities, permanent, positive, (namely the unseen,)
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man—I, the general Soul,
Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
Breathe my breath also through these songs.

WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH.

WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH.

First published in 1870.

Whispers of heavenly death, murmur'd I hear;
Labial gossip of night—sibilant chorals;
Footsteps gently ascending—mystical breezes, wafted soft and low;
Ripples of unseen rivers—tides of a current, flowing, forever flowing;
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human tears?)

I see, just see, skyward, great cloud-masses;
Mournfully, slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing;
With, at times, a half-dimm'd, sadden'd, far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition, rather—some solemn, immortal birth:
On the frontiers, to eyes impenetrable,
Some Soul is passing over.)

Walt Whitman
1888
to his friend David McKay

DAREST THOU NOW, O SOUL.

First published in 1870

1

Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet, nor any path to follow?

2

No map, there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

3

I know it not, O Soul;
Nor dost thou—all is a blank before us;
All waits, undream'd of, in that region—that inaccessible land.

4

Till, when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds, bound us.

5

Then we burst forth—we float,
In Time and Space, O Soul—prepared for them;
Equal, equipt at last—(O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil,
O Soul.

OF HIM I LOVE DAY AND NIGHT.

First published in 1870.

Of him I love day and night, I dream'd I heard he was dead;
And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love—but he was not in that place;
And I dream'd I wander'd, searching among burial-places, to find him;
And I found that every place was a burial-place;
The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house is now;)
The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as full of the dead as of the living,

And fuller, O vastly fuller, of the dead than of the living ;
—And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person and age,
And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd ;
And now I am willing to disregard burial-places, and dispense with them ;
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently everywhere, even in the room where I eat or sleep, I should be satisfied ;
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be duly render'd to powder, and pour'd in the sea, I shall be satisfied ;
Or if it be distributed to the winds, I shall be satisfied.

ASSURANCES.

First published in 1856 under title of "Faith Poem."

I NEED no assurances—I am a man who is preoccupied, of his own Soul ;[1]
I do not doubt that from under the feet, and beside the hands and face I am cognizant of, are now looking faces I am not cognizant of—calm and actual faces ;
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world are latent in any iota of the world ;[2]
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless —in vain I try to think how limitless ;
I do not doubt that the orbs, and the systems of orbs, play their swift sports through the air on purpose—and that I shall one day be eligible to do as much as they, and more than they ;[3]
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on, millions of years ;

[1] After line 1, 1856 '60 add "I do not doubt that whatever I know at a given time, there waits for me more which I do not know."
[2] After line 3, 1856 '60 add "I do not doubt there are realizations I have no idea of waiting for me through time and through the universes—also upon this earth."
[3] After line 5, 1856 '60 add :
"I do not doubt there is far more in trivialities, insects, vulgar persons, slaves, dwarfs, weeds, rejected refuse, than I have supposed ;
I do not doubt there is more in myself than I have supposed—and more in all men and women—and more in my poems than I have supposed."

I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and exteriors have their exteriors—and that the eye-sight has another eye-sight, and the hearing another hearing, and the voice another voice;

I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are provided for—and that the deaths of young women, and the deaths of little children, are provided for;

(Did you think Life was so well provided for—and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for?)[1]

I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of them—no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points;[2]

I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen, any where, at any time, is provided for, in the inherences of things;

I do not think Life provides for all, and for Time and Space—but I believe Heavenly Death provides for all.[3]

YET, YET, YE DOWNCAST HOURS.

First published in 1870.

1

Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also;
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles!
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns—I hear the o'erweening, mocking voice,
Matter is conqueror—matter, triumphant only, continues onward.

2

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me,
The call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarm'd, uncertain,
The Sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,
Come tell me where I am speeding—tell me my destination

[1] Line 9 added in 1870.

[2] After line 10, 1856 '60 and "Songs Before Parting" add:
"I do not doubt that shallowness, meanness, malignance, are provided for;
I do not doubt that cities, you, America, the remainder of the earth, politics, freedom, degradations, are carefully provided for."

[3] Line 12 added in 1870.

3

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,
I approach, hear, behold—the sad mouth, the look out of the eyes, your mute inquiry,
Whither I go from the bed I recline on, come tell me:
Old age, alarm'd, uncertain—A young woman's voice, appealing to me for comfort;
A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape?*

QUICKSAND YEARS.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

QUICKSAND years that whirl me I know not whither,
Your schemes, politics, fail—lines give way—substances mock and elude me;
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd Soul, eludes not;
One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—that out of all is sure;
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life—what at last finally remains?
When shows break up, what but One's-Self is sure?

THAT MUSIC ALWAYS ROUND ME.

First published in 1860

THAT music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning—yet long untaught I did not hear;
But now the chorus I hear, and am elated;
A tenor, strong, ascending, with power and health, with glad notes of day-break I hear,
A soprano, at intervals, sailing buoyantly over the tops of immense waves,
A transparent bass, shuddering lusciously under and through the universe,
The triumphant tutti—the funeral wailings, with sweet flutes and violins—all these I fill myself with;
I hear not the volumes of sound merely—I am moved by the exquisite meanings,

I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving, contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in emotion;
I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I think I begin to know them.

AS IF A PHANTOM CARESS'D ME.

First published in 1867.

As if a phantom caress'd me,
I thought I was not alone, walking here by the shore;
But the one I thought was with me, as now I walk by the shore —the one I loved, that caress'd me,
As I lean and look through the glimmering light—that one has utterly disappear'd,
And those appear that are hateful to me, and mock me.

HERE, SAILOR!

First published in 1860.

What ship, puzzled at sea, cons for the true reckoning?
Or, coming in, to avoid the bars, and follow the channel, a perfect pilot needs?
Here, sailor! Here, ship! take aboard the most perfect pilot,
Whom, in a little boat, putting off, and rowing, I, hailing you, offer.

A NOISELESS, PATIENT SPIDER

First published in 1870.

A noiseless, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them;

Till the bridge you will need, be form'd—till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

THE LAST INVOCATION.

First published in 1870.

1

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful, fortress'd house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks—from the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

2

Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper,
Set ope the doors, O Soul!

3

Tenderly! be not impatient!
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh!
Strong is your hold, O love.)

AS I WATCH'D THE PLOUGHMAN PLOUGHING.

First published in 1870.

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,
Or the sower sowing in the fields—or the harvester harvesting,
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies:
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest according.)

PENSIVE AND FALTERING.

First published in 1870.

Pensive and faltering,
The words, *the dead*, I write;
For living are the Dead;
(Haply the only living, only real,
And I the apparition—I the spectre.)

SEA-SHORE MEMORIES.

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING.

First published in 1860; in that and 1867 under title of "A Word Out of the Sea."

I

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,[1]
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,[2]
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands, and the fields beyond, where the child, leaving his bed, wander'd alone, bare-headed, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows, twining and twisting as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories, sad brother—from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon, late-risen, and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of sickness and love, there in the transparent mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart, never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such, as now they start, the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither—ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man—yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them—but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

[1] 1860 '67 read "Out of the rock'd cradle."
[2] After line 2, 1860 adds "Out of the boy's mother's womb, and from the nipples of her breasts."

2

Once, Paumanok,
When the snows had melted—when the lilac-scent was in the air,[1] and the Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this sea-shore, in some briers,
Two guests from Alabama—two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs, spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird, to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird, crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

3

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great Sun!
While we bask—we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow South, or winds blow North,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.[2]

4

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward, all summer, in the sound of the sea,
And at night, under the full of the moon, in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

5

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up, sea-winds, along Paumanok's shore!
I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me.

[1] "when the lilac-scent was in the air" added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 read "If we two but keep together."

6

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long, on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down, almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer, wonderful, causing tears.

He call'd on his mate ;
He pour'd forth the meanings which I, of all men, know.

Yes, my brother, I know ;
The rest might not—but I have treasur'd every note ;
For once, and more than once, dimly, down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd, to keep, to sing—now translating the notes,
Following you, my brother.

7

Soothe ! soothe ! soothe !
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind, embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon—it rose late ;
O it is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes, pushes upon the land,
With love—with love.

O night ! do I not see my love fluttering out there among the breakers ?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white ?

Loud ! loud ! loud !
Loud I call to you, my love !

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves;
Surely you must know who is here, is here;
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again, if you only would;
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat![1]
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth;
Somewhere listening to catch you, must be the one I want.

Shake out, carols!
Solitary here—the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! Death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O, under that moon, where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless, despairing carols.

But soft! sink low;
Soft! let me just murmur;
And do you wait a moment, you husky-noised sea;
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint—I must be still, be still to listen;
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.

Hither, my love!
Here I am! Here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you;
This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.

[1] "O trembling throat!" added in 1867.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere!
That is the whistle of the wind—it is not my voice;
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray;
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky, near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
O all—and I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

Yet I murmur, murmur on![1]
O murmurs—you yourselves make me continue to sing, I know not why.

O past! O life! O songs of joy![2]
In the air—in the woods—over fields;
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my love no more, no more with me![3]
We two together no more.

8

The aria sinking;
All else continuing—the stars shining,
The winds blowing—the notes of the bird continuous echoing,[4]
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,[5]
On the sands of Paumanok's shore, gray and rustling;
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching;
The boy extatic—with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the Soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there—the trio—each uttering,

[1] 1860 reads "Murmur! murmur on!"
[2] 1860 reads "O past! O joy!"
[3] 1860 reads "Loved—but no more with me."
[4] 1860 reads "the notes of the wondrous bird echoing."
[5] 1860 reads "yet, as ever, incessantly moaning."

The undertone—the savage old mother, incessantly crying,
To the boy's Soul's questions sullenly timing—some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard of love.

9

Demon or bird![1] (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it mostly to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping,
Now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for—I awake,
And already a thousand singers—a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,
Never to die.

O you singer, solitary,[2] singing by yourself—projecting me;
O solitary me, listening—nevermore shall I cease perpetuating you;
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there, in the night,
By the sea, under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd[3] — the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew[4]! (it lurks in the night here somewhere;)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!
O a word! O what is my destination? (I fear it is henceforth chaos;)
O how joys, dreads, convolutions, human shapes, and all shapes, spring as from graves around me!
O phantoms! you cover all the land and all the sea!
O I cannot see in the dimness whether you smile or frown upon me;
O vapor, a look, a word! O well-beloved!
O you dear women's and men's phantoms!

[1] "Demon or" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "O throes! O you demon, singing," etc.
[3] 1860 reads "The dusky demon aroused," etc.
[4] 1860 reads "some clew!" "(it lurks in the night here somewhere;)" added in 1867.

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

10

Whereto[1] answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,
Lisp'd to me[2] the low and delicious word DEATH;
And again Death—ever Death, Death, Death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird, nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near, as privately for me, rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears, and laving me softly all over,[3]
Death, Death, Death, Death, Death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,[4]
That he sang to me[5] in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs, at random,
My own songs, awaked from that hour;
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song, and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
The sea whisper'd me.

ELEMENTAL DRIFTS.

First published in 1860.

1

ELEMENTAL drifts!
How I wish[6] I could impress others as you have just[7] been impressing me!

[1] "Whereto" added in 1867.
[2] 1860 reads "Lisp'd to me constantly," etc.
[3] "and laving me softly all over" added in 1867.
[4] 1860 reads "But fuse the song of two together."
[5] 1860 reads "That was sung to me," etc.
[6] 1860 '67 read "O I wish," etc.
[7] 1860 '67 read "as you and the waves have just," etc.

As I ebb'd with an ebb of the ocean of life,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd where the ripples[1] continually wash you, Paumanok,
Where they rustle up, hoarse and sibilant,
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways,
I, musing, late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
Alone, held by this eternal Self of me, out of the pride of which I utter my poems,[2]
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,
In the rim, the sediment, that stands for all the water and all the land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes, reverting from the south, dropt, to follow those slender winrows,
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by the tide:
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of me,
Paumanok, there and then, as I thought the old thought of likenesses,
These you presented to me, you fish-shaped island,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd with that eternal Self of me, seeking types.

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,[3]
I, too, but signify, at the utmost, a little wash'd-up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,[4]
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,

[1] 1860 '67 read "sea-ripples."
[2] 1860 reads "Alone, held by the eternal Self of me, that threatens to go the better of me, and stifle me."
[3] After line 23, 1860 reads "At once I find the least thing that belongs to me, or that I see or touch, I know not."
[4] 1860 adds "here preceding what follows."

Aware now, that, amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon
me, I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my insolent poems the real ME stands yet
untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and
bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have
written,[1]
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.[2]

Now I perceive I have not understood anything—not a single
object—and that no man ever can.

I perceive Nature, here in sight of the sea, is taking advantage
of me, to dart upon me, and sting me,[3]
Because I have dared to open my mouth, to sing at all.

3

You oceans both! I close with you;[4]
We murmur alike reproachfully, rolling our sands and drift,
knowing not why,[5]
These little shreds indeed, standing for you and me and all.[6]

You friable shore, with trails of debris!
You fish-shaped island! I take what is underfoot;
What is yours is mine, my father.

I too Paumanok,
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and been
wash'd on your shores;
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast, my father,
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
I hold you so firm, till you answer me something.

[1] 1860 adds "or shall write."
[2] 1860 reads "Striking me with insults till I fall helpless upon the sand."
[3] After line 35, 1860 reads "Because I was assuming so much."
[4] 1860 reads "You oceans both! You tangible land! Nature!
Be not too rough with me—I submit—I close with you."
[5] Line 38 added in 1870.
[6] 1860 '67 read "These little shreds shall, indeed, stand for all."

Kiss me, my father,
Touch me with your lips, as I touch those I love,
Breathe to me, while I hold you close, the secret of the murmuring I envy.[1]

4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)
Cease not your moaning, you fierce old mother,
Endlessly cry for your castaways—but fear not, deny not me,
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet, as I touch you, or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,
I gather for myself, and for this phantom, looking down where we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine!
We, loose winrows, little corpses,
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
(See! from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last!
See—the prismatic colors, glistening and rolling!)
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell;
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or soil;
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and thrown;
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating, drifted at random;
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature;
Just as much, whence we come, that blare of the cloud-trumpets;
We, capricious, brought hither, we know not whence, spread out before you,
You, up there, walking or sitting,
Whoever you are—we too lie in drifts at your feet.

[1] After line 52, 1860 adds "For I fear I shall become crazed, if I cannot emulate it, and utter myself as well as it.

Sea-raff! Crook-tongued waves,
O, I will yet sing, some day, what you have said to me."

TEARS.

First published in 1867

Tears! tears! tears!
In the night, in solitude, tears;
On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand;
Tears—not a star shining—all dark and desolate;
Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head:
—O who is that ghost?—that form in the dark, with tears?
What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the sand?
Streaming tears—sobbing tears—throes, choked with wild cries;
O storm, embodied, rising, careering, with swift steps along the beach;
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind! O belching and desperate!
O shade, so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and regulated pace;
But away, at night, as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosen'd ocean,
Of tears! tears! tears!

ABOARD, AT A SHIP'S HELM.

First published in 1867.

Aboard, at a ship's helm,
A young steersman, steering with care.

A bell through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,
An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs ringing,
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For, as on the alert, O steersman, you mind the bell's admonition,
The bows turn,—the freighted ship, tacking, speeds away under her gray sails,
The beautiful and noble ship, with all her precious wealth, speeds away gaily and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!
O ship of the body—ship of the soul—voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.

ON THE BEACH, AT NIGHT.

First published in 1870.

1

On the beach, at night,
Stands a child, with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses spreading,
Lower, sullen and fast, athwart and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
Ascends, large and calm, the lord-star Jupiter;
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate brothers, the Pleiades.

2

From the beach, the child, holding the hand of her father,
Those burial-clouds that lower, victorious, soon to devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,
With these kisses let me remove your tears;
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky—shall devour the stars only in apparition:
Jupiter shall emerge—be patient—watch again another night—the Pleiades shall emerge,
They are immortal—all those stars, both silvery and golden, shall shine out again,
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again—they endure;
The vast immortal suns, and the long-enduring pensive moons, shall again shine.

3

Then, dearest child, mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
(With my lips soothing thee, adding, I whisper,

I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter,
Longer than sun, or any revolving satellite,
Or the radiant brothers, the Pleiades.

THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE.

First published in 1867.

The world below the brine;
Forests at the bottom of the sea—the branches and leaves,
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds—the thick tangle, the openings, and the pink turf,
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold—the play of light through the water,
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks—coral, gluten, grass, rushes—and the aliment of the swimmers,
Sluggish existences grazing there, suspended, or slowly crawling close to the bottom,
The sperm-whale at the surface, blowing air and spray, or disporting with his flukes,
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-leopard, and the sting-ray;
Passions there—wars, pursuits, tribes—sight in those ocean-depths—breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do;
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air breathed by beings like us, who walk this sphere;
The change onward from ours, to that of beings who walk other spheres.

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE.

First published in 1856, under title of "Clef Poem."

On the beach at night alone,[1]
As the old mother sways her to and fro, singing her husky song,[2]
As I watch the bright stars shining—I think a thought of the clef of the universes, and of the future.[3]

[1] 1856 '60 begin the poem "This Night I am happy." Line 1 added in 1867.

[2] Line 2 added in 1860, which reads "As I walk the beach where the old mother sways to and fro, singing her savage and husky song."

[3] After line 3, 1856 '60 add:

A VAST SIMILITDUE interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets, comets, asteroids,
All the substances of the same, and all that is spiritual upon the same,
All distances of place, however wide,
All distances of time—all inanimate forms,
All Souls—all living bodies, though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes—the fishes, the brutes,
All men and women—me also;
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages;
All identities that have existed, or may exist, on this globe, or any globe;
All lives and deaths—all of the past, present, future;
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd, and shall forever span them, and compactly hold them, and enclose them.[1]

"What can the future bring me more than I have?
Do you suppose I wish to enjoy life in other spheres?

I say distinctly I comprehend no better sphere than this earth,
I comprehend no better life than the life of my body.

I do not know what follows the death of my body,
But I know well that whatever it is, it is best for me,
And I know well that whatever is really Me shall live just as much as before.

I am not uneasy but I shall have good housing to myself,
But this is my first—how can I like the rest any better?
Here I grew up—the studs and rafters are grown parts of me.

I am not uneasy but I am to be beloved by young and old men, and to love them the same,
I suppose the pink nipples of the breasts of women with whom I shall sleep will taste the same to my lips,*
But this is the nipple of a breast of my mother, always near and always divine to me, her true child and son, whatever comes.†

I suppose I am to be eligible to visit the stars, in my time,
I suppose I shall have myriads of new experiences—and that the experience of this earth will prove only one out of myriads;
But I believe my body and my Soul already indicate those experiences,
And I believe I shall find nothing in the stars more majestic and beautiful than I have already found on the earth,
And I believe I have this night a clew through the universes,
And I believe I have this night thought a thought of the clef of eternity."

[1] "and enclose them" added in 1870.

* 1860 reads "will touch the side of my face the same."

† "Whatever comes" added in 1860.

LEAVES OF GRASS.

A CAROL OF HARVEST, FOR 1867.

First published in 1870.

1

A SONG of the good green grass!
A song no more of the city streets;
A song of farms—a song of the soil of fields.

A song with the smell of sun-dried hay, where the nimble pitchers handle the pitch-fork;
A song tasting of new wheat, and of fresh-husk'd maize.

2

For the lands, and for these passionate days, and for myself,
Now I awhile return to thee, O soil of Autumn fields,
Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee,
Answering the pulses of thy sane and equable heart,
Tuning a verse for thee.

O Earth, that hast no voice, confide to me a voice!
O harvest of my lands! O boundless summer growths!
O lavish, brown, parturient earth! O infinite, teeming womb!
A verse to seek, to see, to narrate thee.

3

Ever upon this stage,
Is acted God's calm, annual drama,
Gorgeous processions, songs of birds,
Sunrise, that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul,
The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical, strong waves,
The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender, tapering trees,
The flowers, the grass, the lilliput, countless armies of the grass,

The heat, the showers, the measureless pasturages,
The scenery of the snows, the winds' free orchestra,
The stretching, light-hung roof of clouds—the clear cerulean, and the bulging, silvery fringes,
The high dilating stars, the placid, beckoning stars,
The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald meadows,
The shows of all the varied lands, and all the growths and products.

4

Fecund America! To-day,
Thou art all over set in births and joys!
Thou groan'st with riches! thy wealth clothes thee as with a swathing garment!
Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions!
A myriad-twining life, like interlacing vines, binds all thy vast demesne!
As some huge ship, freighted to water's edge, thou ridest into port!
As rain falls from the heaven, and vapors rise from earth, so have the precious values fallen upon thee, and risen out of thee!
Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!
Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty!
Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns!
Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle, and lookest out upon thy world, and lookest East, and lookest West!
Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles—that giv'st a million farms, and missest nothing!
Thou All-Acceptress—thou Hospitable—(thou only art hospitable, as God is hospitable.)

5

When late I sang, sad was my voice;
Sad were the shows around me, with deafening noises of hatred, and smoke of conflict;
In the midst of the armies, the Heroes, I stood,
Or pass'd with slow step through the wounded and dying.

But now I sing not War,
Nor the measur'd march of soldiers, nor the tents of camps,
Nor the regiments hastily coming up, deploying in line of battle.

No more the dead and wounded;
No more the sad, unnatural shows of War.

Ask'd room those flush'd immortal ranks? the first forth-stepping armies?
Ask room, alas, the ghastly ranks—the armies dread that follow'd.

6

(Pass—pass, ye proud brigades!
So handsome, dress'd in blue—with your tramping, sinewy legs;
With your shoulders young and strong—with your knapsacks and your muskets;
—How elate I stood and watch'd you, where, starting off, you march'd!

Pass;—then rattle, drums, again!
Scream, you steamers on the river, out of whistles loud and shrill, your salutes!
For an army heaves in sight—O another gathering army!
Swarming, trailing on the rear—O you dread, accruing army!
O you regiments so piteous, with your mortal diarrhœa! with your fever!
O my land's maimed darlings! with the plenteous bloody bandage and the crutch!
Lo! your pallid army follow'd!)

7

But on these days of brightness,
On the far-stretching beauteous landscape, the roads and lanes, the high-piled farm-wagons, and the fruits and barns,
Shall the dead intrude?

Ah, the dead to me mar not—they fit well in Nature;
They fit very well in the landscape, under the trees and grass,
And along the edge of the sky, in the horizon's far margin.

Nor do I forget you, departed;
Nor in winter or summer, my lost ones;
But most, in the open air, as now, when my soul is rapt and at peace—like pleasing phantoms,
Your dear memories, rising, glide silently by me.

8

I saw the day, the return of the Heroes;
(Yet the Heroes never surpass'd, shall never return;
Them, that day, I saw not.)

I saw the interminable Corps—I saw the processions of armies,
I saw them approaching, defiling by, with divisions,
Streaming northward, their work done, camping awhile in clusters of mighty camps.

No holiday soldiers!—youthful, yet veterans;
Worn, swart, handsome, strong, of the stock of homestead and workshop,
Harden'd of many a long campaign and sweaty march,
Inured on many a hard-fought, bloody field.

9

A pause—the armies wait;
A million flush'd, embattled conquerors wait;
The world, too, waits—then, soft as breaking night, and sure as dawn,
They melt—they disappear.

Exult, indeed, O lands! victorious lands!
Not there your victory, on those red, shuddering fields;
But here and hence your victory.

Melt, melt away, ye armies! disperse, ye blue-clad soldiers!
Resolve ye back again—give up, for good, your deadly arms;
Other the arms, the fields henceforth for you, or South or North, or East or West,
With saner wars—sweet wars—life-giving wars.

10

Loud, O my throat, and clear, O soul!
The season of thanks, and the voice of full-yielding;
The chant of joy and power for boundless fertility.

All till'd and untill'd fields expand before me;
I see the true arenas of my race—or first, or last,
Man's innocent and strong arenas.

I see the Heroes at other toils;
I see, well-wielded in their hands, the better weapons.

11

I see where America, Mother of All,
Well-pleased, with full-spanning eye, gazes forth, dwells long,
And counts the varied gathering of the products.

Busy the far, the sunlit panorama;
Prairie, orchard, and yellow grain of the North,
Cotton and rice of the South, and Louisianian cane;
Open, unseeded fallows, rich fields of clover and timothy,
Kine and horses feeding, and droves of sheep and swine,
And many a stately river flowing, and many a jocund brook,
And healthy uplands with their herby-perfumed breezes,
And the good green grass—that delicate miracle, the ever-recurring grass.

12

Toil on, Heroes! harvest the products!
Not alone on those warlike fields, the Mother of All,
With dilated form and lambent eyes, watch'd you.

Toil on, Heroes! toil well! Handle the weapons well!
The Mother of All—yet here, as ever, she watches you.

Well-pleased, America, thou beholdest,
Over the fields of the West, those crawling monsters,
The human-divine inventions, the labor-saving implements:
Beholdest, moving in every direction, imbued as with life, the revolving hay-rakes,
The steam-power reaping-machines, and the horse-power machines,
The engines, thrashers of grain, and cleaners of grain, well separating the straw—the nimble work of the patent pitch-fork;
Beholdest the newer saw-mill, the southern cotton-gin, and the rice-cleanser.

Beneath thy look, O Maternal,
With these, and else, and with their own strong hands, the Heroes harvest.

All gather, and all harvest;
(Yet but for thee, O Powerful! not a scythe might swing, as now, in security;
Not a maize-stalk dangle, as now, its silken tassels in peace.)

13

Under Thee only they harvest—even but a wisp of hay, under thy great face, only;
Harvest the wheat of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin—every barbed spear, under thee;
Harvest the maize of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee—each ear in its light-green sheath,
Gather the hay to its myriad mows, in the odorous, tranquil barns,
Oats to their bins—the white potato, the buckwheat of Michigan, to theirs;
Gather the cotton in Mississippi or Alabama—dig and hoard the golden, the sweet potato of Georgia and the Carolinas,
Clip the wool of California or Pennsylvania,
Cut the flax in the Middle States, or hemp, or tobacco in the Borders,
Pick the pea and the bean, or pull apples from the trees, or bunches of grapes from the vines,
Or aught that ripens in all These States, or North or South,
Under the beaming sun, and under Thee.

THE SINGER IN THE PRISON.

First published in 1870.

1

O sight of shame, and pain, and dole!
O fearful thought—a convict Soul!

Rang the refrain along the hall, the prison,
Rose to the roof, the vaults of heaven above,
Pouring in floods of melody, in tones so pensive, sweet and strong, the like whereof was never heard,
Reaching the far-off sentry, and the armed guards, who ceas'd their pacing,
Making the hearer's pulses stop for extasy and awe.

2

O sight of pity, gloom, and dole!
O pardon me, a hapless Soul!

The sun was low in the west one winter day,
When down a narrow aisle, amid the thieves and outlaws of the land,
(There by the hundreds seated, sear-faced murderers, wily counterfeiters,
Gather'd to Sunday church in prison walls—the keepers round,
Plenteous, well-arm'd, watching, with vigilant eyes,)
All that dark, cankerous blotch, a nation's criminal mass,
Calmly a Lady walk'd, holding a little innocent child by either hand,
Whom, seating on their stools beside her on the platform,
She, first preluding with the instrument, a low and musical prelude,
In voice surpassing all, sang forth a quaint old hymn.

3

THE HYMN.

A Soul, confined by bars and bands,
Cries, Help! O help! and wrings her hands;
Blinded her eyes—bleeding her breast,
Nor pardon finds, nor balm of rest.

O sight of shame, and pain, and dole!
O fearful thought—a convict Soul!

Ceaseless, she paces to and fro;
O heart-sick days! O nights of wo!
Nor hand of friend, nor loving face;
Nor favor comes, nor word of grace.

O sight of pity, gloom, and dole!
O pardon me, a hapless Soul!

It was not I that sinn'd the sin,
The ruthless Body dragg'd me in;
Though long I strove courageously,
The Body was too much for me.

O Life! no life, but bitter dole!
O burning, beaten, baffled Soul!

(Dear prison'd Soul, bear up a space,
For soon or late the certain grace;

To set thee free, and bear thee home,
The Heavenly Pardoner, Death shall come.

Convict no more—nor shame, nor dole!
Depart! a God-enfranchis'd Soul!)

4

The singer ceas'd;
One glance swept from her clear, calm eyes, o'er all those upturn'd faces;
Strange sea of prison faces—a thousand varied, crafty, brutal, seam'd and beauteous faces;
Then rising, passing back along the narrow aisle between them,
While her gown touch'd them, rustling in the silence,
She vanish'd with her children in the dusk.

5

While upon all, convicts and armed keepers, ere they stirr'd,
(Convict forgetting prison, keeper his loaded pistol,)
A hush and pause fell down, a wondrous minute,
With deep, half-stifled sobs, and sound of bad men bow'd, and moved to weeping,
And youth's convulsive breathings, memories of home,
The mother's voice in lullaby, the sister's care, the happy childhood,
The long-pent spirit rous'd to reminiscence;
—A wondrous minute then—But after, in the solitary night, to many, many there,
Years after—even in the hour of death—the sad refrain—the tune, the voice, the words,
Resumed—the large, calm Lady walks the narrow aisle,
The wailing melody again—the singer in the prison sings:

O sight of shame, and pain, and dole!
O fearful thought—a convict Soul!

WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME.

First published in 1870.

WARBLE me now, for joy of Lilac-time,
Sort me, O tongue and lips, for Nature's sake, and sweet life's sake—and death's the same as life's,

Souvenirs of earliest summer—birds' eggs, and the first berries ;
Gather the welcome signs, (as children, with pebbles, or stringing shells ;)
Put in April and May—the hylas croaking in the ponds—the elastic air,
Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,
Blue-bird, and darting swallow—nor forget the high-hole flashing his golden wings,
The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapor,
Spiritual, airy insects, humming on gossamer wings,
Shimmer of waters, with fish in them—the cerulean above ;
All that is jocund and sparkling—the brooks running,
The maple woods, the crisp February days, and the sugar-making ;
The robin, where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,
Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building the nest of his mate ;
The melted snow of March—the willow sending forth its yellow-green sprouts ;
—For spring-time is here ! the summer is here ! and what is this in it and from it ?
Thou, Soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not what ;
Come ! let us lag here no longer—let us be up and away !
O for another world ! O if one could but fly like a bird !
O to escape—to sail forth, as in a ship !
To glide with thee, O Soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the waters !
—Gathering these hints, these preludes—the blue sky, the grass, the morning drops of dew ;
(With additional songs—every spring will I now strike up additional songs,
Nor ever again forget, these tender days, the chants of Death as well as Life ;)
The lilac-scent, the bushes, and the dark green, heart-shaped leaves,
Wood violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called innocence,
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their atmosphere,
To tally, drench'd with them, tested by them,
Cities and artificial life, and all their sights and scenes,
My mind henceforth, and all its meditations—my recitatives,
My land, my age, my race, for once to serve in songs,

(Sprouts, tokens ever of death indeed the same as life,)
To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,
A warble for joy of Lilac-time.

WHO LEARNS MY LESSON COMPLETE?

First published in 1855.

Who learns my lesson complete?
Boss, journeyman, apprentice—churchman and atheist,
The stupid and the wise thinker—parents and offspring—merchant, clerk, porter and customer,
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—Draw nigh and commence;
It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good lesson,
And that to another, and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument;
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,
I love them quits and quits—I do not halt, and make salaams.

I lie abstracted, and hear beautiful tales of things, and the reasons of things;
They are so beautiful, I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say it to myself—it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe, moving so exactly in its orbit forever and ever, without one jolt, or the untruth of a single second;
I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand years, nor ten billions of years,
Nor plann'd and built one thing after another, as an architect plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is immortal;

I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally wonderful,
and how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally
wonderful;
[1]And pass'd from a babe, in the creeping trance of a couple of
summers and winters, to articulate and walk—All this is
equally wonderful.[2]

And that my Soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each
other without ever seeing each other, and never perhaps
to see each other, is every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these, is just as wonderful;
And that I can remind you, and you think them, and know them
to be true, is just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth, and on with the earth,
is equally wonderful,
And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars, is
equally wonderful.[3]

THOUGHT.

First published in 1860. Part of "Thought 4" in that and edition of 1867.

Of Justice—As if Justice could be anything but the same ample
law, expounded by natural judges and saviors,
As if it might be this thing or that thing, according to decisions.

[1] 1855 '56 begin line 21 "And how I was not palpable once but am now—and was born on the last day of May 1819 and passed from a babe in the creeping trance of three summers and three winters to articulate," etc. 1860 reads as above with change "and was born on the last day of the Fifth Month, in the year 43 of America."

[2] After line 21, 1855 adds "And that I grew six feet high—and that I have become a man thirty-six years old in 1855—and that I am here anyhow—are all equally wonderful." 1860 '67 read as above with change "thirty-six years old in the year 79 of America."

[3] 1855 '56 add "Come! I should like to hear you tell me what there is in yourself that is not just as wonderful, and I should like to hear the name of anything between Sunday morning and Saturday night that is not just as wonderful." 1860 reads as above with change "First Day morning and Seventh Day night."

MYSELF AND MINE.

First published in 1860.

Myself and mine gymnastic ever,[1]
To stand the cold or heat—to take good aim with a gun—to sail a boat—to manage horses—to beget superb children,
To speak readily and clearly—to feel at home among common people,
And to hold our own in terrible positions, on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer;
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers—I welcome them also;)
But for the fibre of things, and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plenteous Supreme Gods, that The States may realize them, walking and talking.

Let me have my own way;
Let others promulge the laws—I will make no account of the laws;
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace—I hold up agitation and conflict;
I praise no eminent man—I rebuke to his face the one that was thought most worthy.

(Who are you? you mean devil! And what are you secretly guilty of, all your life?
Will you turn aside all your life? Will you grub and chatter all your life?)

(And who are you—blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages, reminiscences,
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak a single word?)

Let others finish specimens—I never finish specimens;
I shower them by exhaustless laws, as Nature does, fresh and modern continually.

[1] 1860 for line 1 reads "It is ended—I dally no more, after to-day I inure myself to run, leap, swim, wrestle, fight."

I give nothing as duties;
What others give as duties, I give as living impulses;
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions—I dispose of nothing—I arouse unanswerable questions;
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?
What about these likes of myself, that draw me so close by tender directions and indirections?[1]

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen to my enemies—as I myself do;
I charge you, too, forever, reject those who would expound me—for I cannot expound myself;
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me;
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista!
O, I see life is not short, but immeasurably long;
I henceforth tread the world, chaste, temperate, an early riser,[2] a steady grower,
Every hour the semen of centuries—and still of centuries.

I will follow up these continual lessons of the air, water, earth;
I perceive I have no time to lose.

TO OLD AGE.

First published in 1860.

I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself grandly as it pours in the great Sea.

[1] After line 25, 1860 reads "Let others deny the evil their enemies charge against them—but how can I the like?
Nothing ever has been, or ever can be, charged against me, half as bad as the evil I really am."

[2] 1860 adds "a gymnast."

MIRACLES.[1]

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of Perfect Miracles."

WHY! who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,
Or stand under trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with any one I love—or sleep in the bed at night with any one I love,
Or sit at table at dinner with my mother,
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive, of a summer forenoon,
Or animals feeding in the fields,
Or birds—or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
Or the wonderfulness of the sun-down—or of stars shining so quiet and bright,
Or the exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in spring;
Or whether I go among those I like best, and that like me best—mechanics, boatmen, farmers,
Or among the savans—or to the soiree—or to the opera,
Or stand a long while looking at the movements of machinery,
Or behold children at their sports,
Or the admirable sight of the perfect old man, or the perfect old woman,
Or the sick in hospitals, or the dead carried to burial,
Or my own eyes and figure in the glass;
These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
The whole referring—yet each distinct, and in its place.

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,

1 1856 begins poem "Realism is mine, my miracles
Take all of the rest—take freely—I keep but my own—I give only of them,
I offer them without end—I offer them to you wherever your feet can carry you, or your eyes reach."
1860 '67 read "What shall I give? and which are my miracles?
Realism is mine—my miracles—Take freely,
Take without end, I offer them to you," etc., as in 1855.

Every foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all that concerns them,
All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles.

To me the sea is a continual miracle;
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the ships, with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?

SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL.

First published in 1870.

1

WHERE the city's ceaseless crowd moves on, the live-long day,
Withdrawn, I join a group of children watching—I pause aside with them.

By the curb, toward the edge of the flagging,
A knife-grinder works at his wheel, sharpening a great knife;
Bending over, he carefully holds it to the stone—by foot and knee,
With measur'd tread, he turns rapidly—As he presses with light but firm hand,
Forth issue, then, in copious golden jets,
Sparkles from the wheel.

2

The scene, and all its belongings—how they seize and affect me!
The sad, sharp-chinn'd old man, with worn clothes, and broad shoulder-band of leather;
Myself, effusing and fluid—a phantom curiously floating—now here absorb'd and arrested;

The group, (an unminded point, set in a vast surrounding;)
The attentive, quiet children—the loud, proud, restive base of the streets;
The low, hoarse purr of the whirling stone—the light-press'd blade,
Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of gold,
Sparkles from the wheel.

EXCELSIOR.

First published in 1867 under title of "Poem of the Heart of The Son of Manhattan Island."

Who has gone farthest? For lo! have not I gone farther?[1]
And who has been just? For I would be the most just person of the earth;
And who most cautious? For I would be more cautious;
And who has been happiest? O I think it is I! I think no one was ever happier than I;
And who has lavish'd all? For I lavish constantly the best I have;
And who has been firmest? For I would be firmer;
And who proudest? For I think I have reason to be the proudest son alive—for I am the son of the brawny and tall-topt city;
And who has been bold and true? For I would be the boldest and truest being of the universe;
And who benevolent? For I would show more benevolence than all the rest;
And who has projected beautiful words through the longest time? Have I not outvied him? have I not said the words that shall stretch through longer time?[2]
And who has receiv'd the love of the most friends? For I know what it is to receive the passionate love of many friends;[3]
And who possesses a perfect and enamour'd body? For I do not believe any one possesses a more perfect or enamour'd body than mine;
And who thinks the amplest thoughts? For I will surround those thoughts;
And who has made hymns fit for the earth? For I am mad with devouring extasy to make joyous hymns for the whole earth!

[1] 1856 '60 '67 read "Who has gone farthest? For I swear I will go farther."

[2] 1856 '60 '67. For "Have I not outvied him?" etc., read "By God! I will outvie him! I will say such words they shall stretch through longer time!"

[3] After line 11, 1856 '60 '67 add "And to whom has been given the sweetest from women and paid them in kind? For I will take the like sweets, and pay them in kind."

MEDIUMS.

First published in 1860.

THEY shall arise in the States,[1]
They shall report Nature, laws, physiology, and happiness;
They shall illustrate Democracy and the kosmos;
They shall be alimentive, amative, perceptive;
They shall be complete women and men—their pose brawny and supple, their drink water, their blood clean and clear;
They shall enjoy materialism and the sight of products—they shall enjoy the sight of the beef, lumber, bread-stuffs, of Chicago, the great city;
They shall train themselves to go in public to become[2] orators and oratresses;
Strong and sweet shall their tongues be—poems and materials of poems shall come from their lives—they shall be makers and finders;
Of them, and of their works, shall emerge divine conveyers, to convey gospels;
Characters, events, retrospections, shall be convey'd in gospels —Trees, animals, waters, shall be convey'd,
Death, the future, the invisible faith, shall all be convey'd.

KOSMOS.

First published in 1860.

WHO includes diversity, and is Nature,
Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and sexuality of the earth, and the great charity of the earth, and the equilibrium also,
Who has not look'd forth from the windows, the eyes, for nothing, or whose brain held audience with messengers for nothing;
Who contains believers and disbelievers—Who is the most majestic lover;
Who holds duly his or her triune proportion of realism, spiritualism, and of the æsthetic, or intellectual,
Who, having consider'd the Body, finds all its organs and parts good;

[1] 1860 adds "—mediums shall."
[2] 1860 reads "to become oratists," etc.

Who, out of the theory of the earth, and of his or her body, understands by subtle analogies all other theories,[1]
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of These States;
Who believes not only in our globe, with its sun and moon, but in other globes, with their suns and moons;
Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for a day, but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, generations,
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, inseparable together.

TO A PUPIL.

First published in 1860.

Is reform needed? Is it through you?
The greater the reform needed, the greater the personality you need to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood, complexion, clean and sweet?
Do you not see how it would serve to have such a Body and Soul, that when you enter the crowd, an atmosphere of desire and command enters with you, and every one is impress'd with your personality?

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!
Go, dear friend![2] if need be, give up all else, and commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness;
Rest not, till you rivet and publish yourself of your own personality.

WHAT AM I, AFTER ALL.

First published in 1860.

What am I, after all, but a child, pleas'd with the sound of my own name? repeating it over and over;[3]
I stand apart to hear—it never tires me.

[1] "all other theories" added in 1867.
[2] 1860. For "dear friend!" reads "mon cher!"
[3] After line 1, 1860 adds "I cannot tell why it affects me so much, when I hear it from women's voices, and from men's voices, or from my own voice."

To you, your name also;
Did you think there was nothing but two or three pronunciations in the sound of your name?

OTHERS MAY PRAISE WHAT THEY LIKE.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Others may praise what they like;
But I, from the banks of the running Missouri, praise nothing, in art, or aught else,
Till it has well inhaled[1] the atmosphere of this river—also the western prairie-scent,
And fully exudes it again.

BROTHER OF ALL, WITH GENEROUS HAND.

(G. P., Buried February, 1870.)

First published in 1870.

1

Brother of all, with generous hand,
Of thee, pondering on thee, as o'er thy tomb, I and my Soul,
A thought to launch in memory of thee,
A burial verse for thee.

What may we chant, O thou within this tomb?
What tablets, pictures, hang for thee, O millionaire?
—The life thou lived'st we know not,
But that thou walk'dst thy years in barter, 'mid the haunts of brokers;
Nor heroism thine, nor war, nor glory.

Yet lingering, yearning, joining soul with thine,
If not thy past we chant, we chant the future,
Select, adorn the future.

2

Lo, Soul, the graves of heroes!
The pride of lands—the gratitudes of men,
The statues of the manifold famous dead, Old World and New,

[1] Drum-Taps reads "Till it has breathed well," etc.

The kings, inventors, generals, poets, (stretch wide thy vision, Soul,)
The excellent rulers of the races, great discoverers, sailors,
Marble and brass select from them, with pictures, scenes,
(The histories of the lands, the races, bodied there,
In what they've built for, graced and graved,
Monuments to their heroes.)

3

Silent, my Soul,
With drooping lids, as waiting, ponder'd,
Turning from all the samples, all the monuments of heroes.

While through the interior vistas,
Noiseless uprose, phantasmic (as, by night, Auroras of the North,)
Lambent tableaux, prophetic, bodiless scenes,
Spiritual projections.

In one, among the city streets, a laborer's home appear'd,
After his day's work done, cleanly, sweet-air'd, the gaslight burning,
The carpet swept, and a fire in the cheerful stove.

In one, the sacred parturition scene,
A happy, painless mother birth'd a perfect child.

In one, at a bounteous morning meal,
Sat peaceful parents, with contented sons.

In one, by twos and threes, young people,
Hundreds concentering, walk'd the paths and streets and roads,
Toward a tall-domed school.

In one a trio, beautiful,
Grandmother, loving daughter, loving daughter's daughter, sat,
Chatting and sewing.

In one, along a suite of noble rooms,
'Mid plenteous books and journals, paintings on the walls, fine statuettes,
Were groups of friendly journeymen, mechanics, young and old,
Reading, conversing.

All, all the shows of laboring life,
City and country, women's, men's and children's,
Their wants provided for, hued in the sun, and tinged for once with joy,
Marriage, the street, the factory, farm, the house-room, lodging-room,
Labor and toil, the bath, gymnasium, play-ground, library, college,
The student, boy or girl, led forward to be taught;
The sick cared for, the shoeless shod—the orphan father'd and mother'd,
The hungry fed, the houseless housed;
(The intentions perfect and divine,
The workings, details, haply human.)

4

O thou within this tomb,
From thee, such scenes—thou stintless, lavish Giver,
Tallying the gifts of Earth—large as the Earth,
Thy name an Earth, with mountains, fields and rivers.

Nor by your streams alone, you rivers,
By you, your banks, Connecticut,
By you, and all your teeming life, Old Thames,
By you, Potomac, laving the ground Washington trod—by you Patapsco,
You, Hudson—you, endless Mississippi—not by you alone,
But to the high seas launch, my thought, his memory.

5

Lo, Soul, by this tomb's lambency,
The darkness of the arrogant standards of the world,
With all its flaunting aims, ambitions, pleasures.

(Old, commonplace, and rusty saws,
The rich, the gay, the supercilious, smiled at long,
Now, piercing to the marrow in my bones,
Fused with each drop my heart's blood jets,
Swim in ineffable meaning.)

Lo, Soul, the sphere requireth, portioneth,
To each his share, his measure,
The moderate to the moderate, the ample to the ample.

Lo, Soul, see'st thou not, plain as the sun,
The only real wealth of wealth in generosity,
The only life of life in goodness?

NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES.

First published in 1860.

NIGHT on the prairies;
The supper is over—the fire on the ground burns low;
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets:[1]
I walk by myself—I stand and look at the stars, which I think now I never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,
I admire death, and test propositions.

How plenteous! How spiritual! How resumé!
The same Old Man and Soul—the same old aspirations, and the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid, till I saw what the not-day exhibited,
I was thinking this globe enough, till there sprang[2] out so noiseless around me myriads of other globes.

Now, while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill me, I will measure myself by them;
And now, touch'd with the lives of other globes, arrived as far along as those of the earth,
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of the earth,
I henceforth no more ignore them, than I ignore my own life,
Or the lives of[3] the earth arrived as far as mine, or waiting to arrive.

O I see now[4] that life cannot exhibit all to me—as the day cannot,
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death.

[1] Lines 2–3 added in 1867.
[2] 1860 for "sprang" reads "tumbled."
[3] 1860 for "of" reads "on."
[4] 1860 reads "O how plainly I see now," etc.

ON JOURNEYS THROUGH THE STATES.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

On journeys through the States we start,
(Ay, through the world—urged by these songs,
Sailing henceforth to every land—to every sea;)
We, willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves, and passing on,
We have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town;
We pass through Kanada, the north-east, the vast valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States;
We confer on equal terms with each of The States,
We make trial of ourselves, and invite men and women to hear;
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the body and the Soul;
Dwell a while and pass on—Be copious, temperate, chaste, magnetic,
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,
And may be just as much as the seasons.

SAVANTISM.

First published in 1870.

Thither, as I look, I see each result and glory retracing itself and nestling close, always obligated;
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts, establishments, even the most minute;
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics, persons, estates;
Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful, admirant,
As a father, to his father going, takes his children along with him.

LOCATIONS AND TIMES.

First published in 1860.

Locations and times—what is it in me that meets them all, whenever and wherever, and makes me at home?
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that corresponds with them?[1]

THOUGHT.

First published in 1860 as part of "Thought 4."

Of Equality—As if it harm'd me, giving others the same chances and rights as myself—As if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same.

OFFERINGS.

First published in 1860.

A thousand perfect men and women appear,
Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children and youths, with offerings.

TESTS.

First published in 1860.

All submit to them, where they sit, inner, secure, unapproachable to analysis, in the Soul;
Not traditions—not the outer authorities are the judges—they are the judges of outer authorities, and of all traditions;
They corroborate as they go, only whatever corroborates themselves, and touches themselves;
For all that, they have it forever in themselves to corroborate far and near, without one exception.

[1] 1860 adds "What is the relation between me and them?"

THE TORCH.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

On my northwest coast in the midst of the night, a fishermen's
group stands watching;
Out on the lake, that expands before them, others are spearing
salmon;
The canoe, a dim shadowy thing, moves across the black water,
Bearing a Torch a-blaze at the prow.

GODS.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

1

Thought of the Infinite—the All!
Be thou my God.

2

Lover Divine, and Perfect Comrade!
Waiting, content, invisible yet, but certain,
Be thou my God.

3

Thou—thou, the Ideal Man!
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,
Complete in Body, and dilate in Spirit,
Be thou my God.

4

O Death—(for Life has served its turn;)
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion!
Be thou my God.

5

Aught, aught, of mightiest, best, I see, conceive, or know,
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O Soul,)
Be thou my God.

6

Or thee, Old Cause, when'er advancing;
All great Ideas, the races' aspirations,
All that exalts, releases thee, my Soul!
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,
Be ye my Gods!

7

Or Time and Space!
Or shape of Earth, divine and wondrous!
Or shape in I myself—or some fair shape, I, viewing, worship,
Or lustrous orb of Sun, or star by night:
Be ye my Gods.

TO ONE SHORTLY TO DIE.

First published in 1860.

1

From all the rest I single out you, having a message for you:
You are to die—Let others tell you what they please, I cannot prevaricate,
I am exact and merciless, but I love you—There is no escape for you.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you—you just feel it,
I do not argue—I bend my head close, and half envelope it,
I sit quietly by—I remain faithful,
I am more than nurse, more than parent or neighbor,
I absolve you from all except yourself, spiritual, bodily—that is eternal—you yourself will surely escape,[1]
The corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious.

2

The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions!
Strong thoughts fill you, and confidence—you smile!
You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick,
You do not see the medicines—you do not mind the weeping friends—I am with you,
I exclude others from you—there is nothing to be commiserated,
I do not commiserate—I congratulate you.

[1] "you yourself will surely escape" added in "Passage to India." 1870

SONG OF THE EXPOSITION.

Applied to The Centennial, Philadelphia, 1876. (Originally recited for opening the Fortieth Annual Exhibition, American Institute, New York, noon, September 7, 1871.) Published in 1871 under title of "After All Not to Create Only."

1

After all, not to create only, or found only,
But to bring, perhaps from afar, what is already founded,
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free;
To fill the gross, the torpid bulk with vital religious fire;
Not to repel or destroy, so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate;
To obey, as well as command—to follow, more than to lead;
These also are the lessons of our New World;
—While how little the New, after all—how much the Old, Old World!

Long, long, long, has the grass been growing,
Long and long has the rain been falling,
Long has the globe been rolling round.

2

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia;
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy, and Achilles' wrath, and Eneas', Odysseus' wanderings;
Placard "*Removed*" and "*To Let*" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus;
Repeat at Jerusalem—place the notice high on Jaffa's gate, and on Mount Moriah;
The same on the walls of your Gothic European Cathedrals, and German, French and Spanish Castles;
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere—a wide, untried domain awaits, demands you.

3

Responsive to our summons,
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,

She comes! this famous Female—as was indeed to be expected;
(For who, so-ever youthful, 'cute and handsome, would wish to
stay in mansions such as those,
When offer'd quarters with all the modern improvements,
With all the fun that 's going—and all the best society?)

She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown;
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance;
I mark her step divine—her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,
Upon this very scene.

The Dame of Dames! can I believe, then,
Those ancient temples classic, and castles strong and feudalistic,
could none of them restrain her?
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante—nor myriad memories, poems,
old associations, magnetize and hold on to her?
But that she 's left them all—and *here?*

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see Her,
The same Undying Soul of Earth's, activity's, beauty's, heroism's
Expression,
Out from her evolutions hither come—submerged the strata of
her former themes,
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's—foundation of to-day's;
Ended, deceas'd, through time, her voice by Castaly's fountain;
Silent through time the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt—silent
those century-baffling tombs;
Closed for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted warriors;
Calliope's call for ever closed—Clio, Melpomene, Thalia closed
and dead;
Seal'd the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana—ended the quest
of the Holy Graal;
Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind—extinct;
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy, midnight troops, sped with
the sunrise;
Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone—Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver
gone,
Palmerin, ogre, departed—vanish'd the turrets that Usk reflected,
Arthur vanish'd with all his knights—Merlin and Lancelot and
Galahad—all gone—dissolv'd utterly, like an exhalation;
Pass'd! pass'd! for us, for ever pass'd! that once so mighty
World—now void, inanimate, phantom World!

Embroider'd, dazzling World! with all its gorgeous legends, myths,
Its kings and barons proud—its priests, and warlike lords, and courtly dames;
Pass'd to its charnel vault—laid on the shelf—coffin'd, with Crown and Armor on,
Blazon'd with Shakspeare's purple page,
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the Animus of all that World,
Escaped, bequeath'd, vital, fugacious as ever, leaving those dead remains, and now this spot approaching, filling;
—And I can hear what maybe you do not—a terrible æsthetical commotion,
With howling, desperate gulp of "flower" and "bower,"
With "Sonnet to Matilda's Eyebrow" quite, quite frantic;
With gushing, sentimental reading circles turn'd to ice or stone;
With many a squeak, (in metre choice,) from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, London;
As she, the illustrious Emigré, (having, it is true, in her day, although the same, changed, journey'd considerable,)
Making directly for this rendezvous—vigorously clearing a path for herself—striding through the confusion,
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertilizers,
Smiling and pleased, with palpable intent to stay,
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

4

But hold—don't I forget my manners?
To introduce the Stranger (what else indeed have I come for?) to thee, Columbia:
In Liberty's name, welcome, Immortal! clasp hands,
And ever henceforth Sisters dear be both.

Fear not, O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround you,
(I candidly confess, a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,)
And yet the same old human race—the same within, without,
Faces and hearts the same—feelings the same—yearnings the same,
The same old love—beauty and use the same.

5

We do not blame thee, Elder World—nor separate ourselves from thee:
(Would the Son separate himself from the Father?)
Looking back on thee—seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs, through past ages bending, building,
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired Cathedral,
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,
We plan, even now, to raise, beyond them all,
Thy great Cathedral, sacred Industry—no tomb,
A Keep for life for practical Invention.

As in a waking vision,
E'en while I chant, I see it rise—I scan and prophesy outside and in,
Its manifold ensemble.

6

Around a Palace,
Loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,
Earth's modern Wonder, History's Seven outstripping,
High rising tier on tier, with glass and iron façades.

Gladdening the sun and sky—enhued in cheerfulest hues,
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner, Freedom,
The banners of The States, the flags of every land,
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser Palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within the walls of all,
Shall all that forwards perfect human life be started,
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,
In every state of practical, busy movement,
The rills of Civilization.

Materials here, under your eye, shall change their shape, as if by magic;

The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and cloth, before you:
You shall see hands at work at all the old processes, and all the new ones;
You shall see the various grains, and how flour is made, and then bread baked by the bakers;
You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada passing on and on till they become bullion;
You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what a composing stick is;
You shall mark, in amazement, the Hoe press whirling its cylinders, shedding the printed leaves steady and fast:
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created before you.

In large calm halls, a stately Museum shall teach you the infinite, solemn lessons of Minerals;
In another, woods, plants, Vegetation shall be illustrated—in another Animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the Music House;
Others for other Arts—Learning, the Sciences, shall all be here;
None shall be slighted—none but shall here be honor'd, help'd, exampled.

7

This, this and these, America, shall be *your* Pyramids and Obelisks,
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,
Your temple at Olympia.

The male and female many laboring not,
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,
With precious benefits to both—glory to all,
To thee, America—and thee, Eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit, Powerful Matrons!
In your vast state, vaster than all the old;
Echoed through long, long centuries to come,
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,
Practical, peaceful life—the people's life—the People themselves,
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

8

Away with themes of war! away with War itself!
Hence from my shuddering sight, to never more return, that show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!
That hell unpent, and raid of blood—fit for wild tigers, or for lop-tongued wolves—not reasoning men!
And in its stead speed Industry's campaigns!
With thy undaunted armies, Engineering!
Thy pennants, Labor, loosen'd to the breeze!
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear!

Away with old romance!
Away with novels, plots, and plays of foreign courts!
Away with love-verses, sugar'd in rhyme—the intrigues, amours of idlers,
Fitted for only banquets of the night, where dancers to late music slide;
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations of the few,
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling chandeliers.

9

To you, ye Reverent, sane Sisters,
To this resplendent day, the present scene,
These eyes and ears that like some broad parterre bloom up around, before me,
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for Art,
To exalt the present and the real,
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade,
To sing, in songs, how exercise and chemical life are never to be baffled;
Boldly to thee, America, to-day! and thee, Immortal Muse!
To practical, manual work, for each and all—to plough, hoe, dig,
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, the vegetables, flowers,
For every man to see to it that he really do something—for every woman too;
To use the hammer, and the saw, (rip or cross-cut,)
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,
To invent a little—something ingenious—to aid the washing, cooking, cleaning,
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee, Muse, to-day and here,
All occupations, duties broad and close,
Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,
The old, old general burdens, interests, joys,
The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,
The house-comforts—the house itself, and all its belongings,
Food and its preservations—chemistry applied to it;
Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded
Man or Woman—the perfect, longeve Personality,
And helps its present life to health and happiness—and shapes
its Soul,
For the eternal Real Life to come.

With latest materials, works,[1]
Steam-power, the great Express lines, gas, petroleum,
These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,
The Pacific Railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis tunnel;
Science advanced, in grandeur and reality, analyzing every thing,
This world all spann'd with iron rails—with lines of steamships
threading every sea,
Our own Rondure, the current globe I bring.

10

And thou, high-towering One—America![2]
Thy swarm of offspring towering high—yet higher thee, above
all towering,
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;
Thou Union, holding all—fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,
Thee, ever thee, I bring.

Thou—also thou, a world!
With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,
Rounding by thee in One—one common orbic language,
One common indivisible destiny and Union.[3]

11

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe,
To those, your ministers in earnest,
I here personify and call my themes,
To make them pass before ye.

Behold, America! (And thou, ineffable Guest and Sister!)
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands:

[1] 1876 adds "The INTERTRANSPORTATION of the world."
[2] 1876 reads "And thou, America!"
[3] 1876 reads "one common indivisible destiny, for All."

Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and mountains,
As in procession coming.

Behold! the sea itself!
And on its limitless, heaving breast, thy ships:
See! where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue!
See! thy steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port!
See! dusky and undulating, their long pennants of smoke!

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,
Wielding all day their axes!

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels—thy oarsmen!
Behold how the ash writhes under those muscular arms!

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths, swinging their sledges;
Overhand so steady—overhand they turn and fall, with joyous clank,
Like a tumult of laughter.

Behold! (for still the procession moves,)
Behold, Mother of All, thy countless sailors, boatmen, coasters!
The myriads of thy young and old mechanics!
Mark—mark the spirit of invention everywhere—thy rapid patents,
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising;
See, from their chimneys, how the tall flame-fires stream!

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,
Thy wealthy Daughter-States, Eastern, and Western,
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Georgia, Texas, and the rest;
Thy limitless crops—grass, wheat, sugar, corn, rice, hemp, hops,
Thy barns all fill'd—thy endless freight-trains, and thy bulging store-houses,
The grapes that ripen on thy vines—the apples in thy orchards,
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes—thy coal—thy gold and silver,
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

12

All thine, O sacred Union!
Ship, farm, shop, barns, factories, mines,
City and State—North, South, item and aggregate,
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! Bulwark of all!
For well we know that while thou givest each and all, (generous as God,)
Without thee, neither all nor each, nor land, home,
Ship, nor mine—nor any here, this day, secure,
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

13

And thou, thy Emblem, waving over all!
Delicate beauty! a word to thee, (it may be salutary;)
Remember, thou hast not always been, as here to-day, so comfortably ensovereign'd;
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee, flag;
Not quite so trim and whole, and freshly blooming, in folds of stainless silk;
But I have seen thee, bunting, to tatters torn, upon thy splinter'd staff,
Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast, with desperate hands,
Savagely struggled for, for life or death—fought over long,
'Mid cannon's thunder-crash, and many a curse, and groan and yell—and rifle-volleys cracking sharp,
And moving masses, as wild demons surging—and lives as nothing risk'd,
For thy mere remnant, grimed with dirt and smoke, and sopp'd in blood;
For sake of that, my beauty—and that thou might'st dally, as now, secure up there,
Many a good man have I seen go under.

14

Now here, and these, and hence, in peace all thine, O Flag!
And here, and hence, for thee, O universal Muse! and thou for them!
And here and hence, O Union, all the work and workmen thine!

The poets, women, sailors, soldiers, farmers, miners, students thine!
None separate from Thee—henceforth one only, we and Thou;
(For the blood of the children—what is it only the blood Maternal?
And lives and works—what are they all at last except the roads to Faith and Death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear Mother!
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in Thee;
—Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross, or lucre—it is for Thee, the Soul, electric, spiritual!
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in Thee! Cities and States in Thee!
Our freedom all in Thee! our very lives in Thee!

ONE SONG, AMERICA, BEFORE I GO.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

One song, America, before I go,
I'd sing, o'er all the rest, with trumpet sound,
For thee—the Future.

I'd sow a seed for thee of endless Nationality;
I'd fashion thy Ensemble, including Body and Soul;
I'd show, away ahead, thy real Union, and how it may be accomplish'd.

(The paths to the House I seek to make,
But leave to those to come, the House itself.)

Belief I sing—and Preparation;
As Life and Nature are not great with reference to the Present only,
But greater still from what is yet to come,
Out of that formula for Thee I sing.

SOUVENIRS OF DEMOCRACY.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

THE business man, the acquirer vast,
After assiduous years, surveying results, preparing for departure,
Devises houses and lands to his children—bequeaths stocks,
goods—funds for a school or hospital,
Leaves money to certain companions to buy tokens, souvenirs of
gems and gold;
Parceling out with care—And then, to prevent all cavil,
His name to his testament formally signs.

But I, my life surveying,
With nothing to show, to devise, from its idle years,
Nor houses, nor lands—nor tokens of gems or gold for my friends,
Only these Souvenirs of Democracy—In them—in all my songs
—behind me leaving,
To You, who ever you are, (bathing, leavening this leaf especially
with my breath—pressing on it a moment with my own
hands;
—Here! feel how the pulse beats in my wrists!—how my heart's-
blood is swelling, contracting!)
I will You, in all, Myself, with promise to never desert you,
To which I sign my name.

AS A STRONG BIRD ON PINIONS FREE.

Commencement Poem, Dartmouth College, N. H., June 26, 1872, on invitation United Literary Societies.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

I

As a strong bird on pinions free,
Joyous, the amplest spaces heavenward cleaving,
Such be the thought I'd think to-day of thee, America,
Such be the recitative I'd bring to-day for thee.

The conceits of the poets of other lands I bring thee not,
Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long,

Nor rhyme—nor the classics—nor perfume of foreign court, or indoor library;
But an odor I'd bring to-day as from forests of pine in the north, in Maine—or breath of an Illinois prairie,
With open airs of Virginia, or Georgia, or Tennessee—or from Texas uplands, or Florida's glades,
With presentment of Yellowstone's scenes, or Yosemite;
And murmuring under, pervading all, I'd bring the rustling sea-sound,
That endlessly sounds from the two great seas of the world.

And for thy subtler sense, subtler refrains, O Union!
Preludes of intellect tallying these and thee—mind-formulas fitted for thee—real, and sane, and large as these and thee;
Thou, mounting higher, diving deeper than we knew—thou transcendental Union!
By thee Fact to be justified—blended with Thought;
Thought of Man justified—blended with God:
Through thy Idea—lo! the immortal Reality!
Through thy Reality—lo! the immortal Idea!

2

Brain of the New World! what a task is thine!
To formulate the Modern. . . . . Out of the peerless grandeur of the modern,
Out of Thyself—comprising Science—to recast Poems, Churches, Art,
(Recast—may-be discard them, end them—May-be their work is done—who knows?)
By vision, hand, conception, on the background of the mighty past, the dead,
To limn, with absolute faith, the mighty living present.

(And yet, thou living, present brain! heir of the dead, the Old World brain!
Thou that lay folded, like an unborn babe, within its folds so long!
Thou carefully prepared by it so long!—haply thou but unfoldest it—only maturest it;
It to eventuate in thee—the essence of the by-gone time contain'd in thee;
Its poems, churches, arts, unwitting to themselves, destined with reference to thee,
The fruit of all the Old, ripening to-day in thee.)

3

Sail—sail thy best, ship of Democracy!
Of value is thy freight—'tis not the Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee!
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone—not of thy western continent alone;
Earth's *résumé* entire floats on thy keel, O ship—is steadied by thy spars;
With thee Time voyages in trust—the antecedent nations sink or swim with thee;
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou bear'st the other continents;
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port triumphant:
—Steer, steer with good strong hand and wary eye, O helmsman—thou carryest great companions,
Venerable, priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal, feudal Europe sails with thee.

4

Beautiful World of new, superber Birth, that rises to my eyes,
Like a limitless golden cloud, filling the western sky;
Emblem of general Maternity, lifted above all;
Sacred shape of the bearer of daughters and sons;
Out of thy teeming womb, thy giant babes in ceaseless procession issuing,
Acceding from such gestation, taking and giving continual strength and life;
World of the Real! world of the twain in one!
World of the Soul—born by the world of the real alone—led to identity, body, by it alone;
Yet in beginning only—incalculable masses of composite, precious materials,
By history's cycles forwarded—by every nation, language, hither sent,
Ready, collected here—a freer, vast, electric World, to be constructed here,
(The true New World—the world of orbic Science, Morals, Literatures to come,)
Thou Wonder World, yet undefined, unform'd—neither do I define thee;
How can I pierce the impenetrable blank of the future?
I feel thy ominous greatness, evil as well as good;

I watch thee, advancing, absorbing the present, transcending the past;
I see thy light lighting and thy shadow shadowing, as if the entire globe;
But I do not undertake to define thee—hardly to comprehend thee;
I but thee name—thee prophecy—as now!
I merely thee ejaculate!

Thee in thy future;
Thee in thy only permanent life, career—thy own unloosen'd mind—thy soaring spirit;
Thee as another equally needed sun, America—radiant, ablaze, swift-moving, fructifying all;
Thee! risen in thy potent cheerfulness and joy—thy endless, great hilarity!
(Scattering for good the cloud that hung so long—that weigh'd so long upon the mind of man,
The doubt, suspicion, dread, of gradual, certain decadence of man;)
Thee in thy larger, saner breeds of Female, Male—thee in thy athletes, moral, spiritual, South, North, West, East,
(To thy immortal breasts, Mother of All, thy every daughter, son, endear'd alike, forever equal;)
Thee in thy own musicians, singers, artists, unborn yet, but certain;
Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization (until which thy proudest material wealth and civilization must remain in vain;)
Thee in thy all-supplying, all-enclosing Worship—thee in no single bible, saviour, merely,
Thy saviours countless, latent within thyself—thy bibles incessant, within thyself, equal to any, divine as any;
Thee in an education grown of thee—in teachers, studies, students, born of thee;
Thee in thy democratic fêtes, en masse—thy high original festivals, operas, lecturers, preachers;
Thee in thy ultimata, (the preparations only now completed—the edifice on sure foundations tied,)
Thee in thy pinnacles, intellect, thought—thy topmost rational joys—thy love, and godlike aspiration,
In thy resplendent coming literati—thy full-lung'd orators—thy sacerdotal bards—kosmic savans,
These! these in thee, (certain to come,) to-day I prophecy.

5

Land tolerating all—accepting all—not for the good alone—all good for thee;
Land in the realms of God to be a realm unto thyself;
Under the rule of God to be a rule unto thyself.

(Lo! where arise three peerless stars,
To be thy natal stars, my country—Ensemble—Evolution—Freedom,
Set in the sky of Law.)

Land of unprecedented faith—God's faith!
Thy soil, thy very subsoil, all upheav'd;
The general inner earth, so long, so sedulously draped over, now and hence for what it is, boldly laid bare,
Open'd by thee to heaven's light, for benefit or bale.

Not for success alone;
Not to fair-sail unintermitted always;
The storm shall dash thy face—the murk of war, and worse than war, shall cover thee all over;
(Wert capable of war—its tug and trials? Be capable of peace, its trials;
For the tug and mortal strain of nations come at last in peace—not war;)
In many a smiling mask death shall approach, beguiling thee—thou in disease shalt swelter;
The livid cancer spread its hideous claws, clinging upon thy breasts, seeking to strike thee deep within;
Consumption of the worst—moral consumption—shall rouge thy face with hectic:
But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases, and surmount them all,
Whatever they are to-day, and whatever through time they may be,
They each and all shall lift, and pass away, and cease from thee;
While thou, Time's spirals rounding—out of thyself, thyself still extricating, fusing,
Equable, natural, mystical Union thou—(the mortal with immortal blent,)
Shalt soar toward the fulfilment of the future—the spirit of the body and the mind,
The Soul—its destinies.

The Soul, its destinies—the real real,
(Purport of all these apparitions of the real;)
In thee, America, the Soul, its destinies;
Thou globe of globes! thou wonder nebulous!
By many a throe of heat and cold convuls'd—(by these thyself solidifying;)
Thou mental, moral orb! thou New, indeed new, Spiritual World!
The Present holds thee not—for such vast growth as thine—for such unparallel'd flight as thine,
The Future only holds thee, and can hold thee.

THE MYSTIC TRUMPETER.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

1

HARK! some wild trumpeter—some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.

I hear thee, trumpeter—listening, alert, I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued—now in the distance lost.

2

Come nearer, bodiless one—haply, in thee resounds
Some dead composer—haply thy pensive life
Was fill'd with aspirations high—unform'd ideals,
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,
That now, ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet echoing, pealing,
Gives out to no one's ears but mine—but freely gives to mine,
That I may thee translate.

3

Blow, trumpeter, free and clear—I follow thee,
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day, withdraw;
A holy calm descends, like dew, upon me,
I walk, in cool refreshing night, the walks of Paradise,
I scent the grass, the moist air, and the roses;

Thy song expands my numb'd, imbonded spirit—thou freest,
launchest me,
Floating and basking upon Heaven's lake.

4

Blow again, trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,
Bring the old pageants—show the feudal world.

What charm thy music works!—thou makest pass before me,
Ladies and cavaliers long dead—barons are in their castle halls—
the troubadours are singing;
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs—some in quest of the
Holy Grail:
I see the tournament—I see the contestants, encased in heavy
armor, seated on stately, champing horses;
I hear the shouts—the sounds of blows and smiting steel:
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—Hark! how the cymbals
clang!
Lo! where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on high!

5

Blow again, trumpeter! and for thy theme,
Take now the enclosing theme of all—the solvent and the setting;
Love, that is pulse of all—the sustenace and the pang;
The heart of man and woman all for love;
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.

O, how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!
I see the vast alembic ever working—I see and know the flames
that heat the world;
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,
So blissful happy some—and some so silent, dark, and nigh to
death:
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—Love, that mocks time and
space;
Love, that is day and night—Love, that is sun and moon and
stars;
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume;
No other words, but words of love—no other thought but Love.

6

Blow again, trumpeter—conjure war's wild alarums.

Swift to thy spell, a shuddering hum like distant thunder rolls ;
Lo ! where the arm'd men hasten—Lo ! mid the clouds of dust, the glint of bayonets ;
I see the grime-faced cannoniers—I mark the rosy flash amid the smoke—I hear the cracking of the guns :
—Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild player, brings every sight of fear,
The deeds of ruthless brigands—rapine, murder—I hear the cries for help !
I see ships foundering at sea—I behold on deck, and below deck, the terrible tableaux.

7

O trumpeter ! methinks I am myself the instrument thou playest !
Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, drawest, changest them, at will :
And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me ;
Thou takest away all cheering light—all hope :
I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of the whole earth ;
I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race—it becomes all mine ;
Mine too the revenges of humanity—the wrongs of ages—baffled feuds and hatreds ;
Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost ! the foe victorious !
(Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands, unshaken to the last ;
Endurance, resolution, to the last.)

8

Now, trumpeter, for thy close,
Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet ;
Sing to my soul—renew its languishing faith and hope ;
Rouse up my slow belief—give me some vision of the future ;
Give me, for once, its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song !
A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes !
Marches of victory—man disenthrall'd—the conqueror at last !
Hymns to the universal God, from universal Man—all joy !
A reborn race appears—a perfect World, all joy !
Women and Men, in wisdom, innocence and health—all joy !
Riotous, laughing bacchanals, fill'd with joy !

War, sorrow, suffering gone—The rank earth purged—nothing but joy left!
The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!
Joy! Joy! in freedom, worship, love! Joy in the ecstacy of life!
Enough to merely be! Enough to breathe!
Joy! Joy! all over Joy!

O STAR OF FRANCE!

1870–71.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," 1872.

1

O STAR of France!
The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,
Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,
Beseems to-day a wreck, driven by the gale—a mastless hulk;
And 'mid its teeming, madden'd, half-drown'd crowds,
Nor helm nor helmsman.

2

Dim, smitten star!
Orb not of France alone—pale symbol of my soul, its dearest hopes,
The struggle and the daring—rage divine for liberty,
Of aspirations toward the far ideal—enthusiast's dreams of brotherhood,
Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

3

Star crucified! by traitors sold!
Star panting o'er a land of death—heroic land!
Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not now rebuke thee;
Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,
And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults, thou ever aimedest highly,
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself, however great the price,

In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd sleep,
In that alone, among thy sisters, thou, Giantess, didst rend the ones that shamed thee,
In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual chains,
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,
The spear thrust in thy side.

4

O star! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long!
Bear up, O smitten orb! O ship, continue on!

Sure, as the ship of all, the Earth itself,
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty,
Onward, beneath the sun, following its course,
So thee, O ship of France!

Finish'd the days, the clouds dispell'd,
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,
When lo! reborn, high o'er the European world,
(In gladness, answering thence, as face afar to face, reflecting ours, Columbia,)
Again thy star, O France—fair, lustrous star,
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,
Shall beam immortal.

VIRGINIA—THE WEST.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

1

The noble Sire, fallen on evil days,
I saw, with hand uplifted, menacing, brandishing,
(Memories of old in abeyance—love and faith in abeyance,)
The insane knife toward the Mother of All.

2

The noble Son, on sinewy feet advancing,
I saw—out of the land of prairies—land of Ohio's waters, and of Indiana,
To the rescue, the stalwart giant, hurry his plenteous offspring,
Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their shoulders.

3

Then the Mother of All, with calm voice speaking,
As to you, Virginia, (I seemed to hear her say,) why strive against me—and why seek my life?
When you yourself forever provide to defend me?
For you provided me Washington—and now these also.

BY BROAD POTOMAC'S SHORE.

First published in "As a Strong Bird," etc., 1872.

1

By broad Potomac's shore—again, old tongue!
(Still uttering—still ejaculating—canst never cease this babble?)
Again, old heart so gay—again to you, your sense, the full flush spring returning;
Again the freshness and the odors—again Virginia's summer sky, pellucid blue and silver,
Again the forenoon purple of the hills,
Again the deathless grass, so noiseless, soft and green,
Again the blood-red roses blooming.

2

Perfume this book of mine, O blood-red roses!
Lave subtly with your waters every line, Potomac!
Give me of you, O spring, before I close, to put between its pages!
O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you!
O smiling earth—O summer sun, give me of you!
O deathless grass, of you!

SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE.

First published in Harper's Magazine, February, 1874. Included in Centennial Songs, 1876.

1

A CALIFORNIA song!
A prophecy and indirection—a thought impalpable, to breathe, as air;
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing—or hamadryads departing;
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and sky,[1]
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the Redwood forest dense.

Farewell, my brethren,
Farewell, O earth and sky—farewell, ye neighboring waters;
My time has ended, my term has come.

2

Along the northern coast,
Just back from the rock-bound shore, and the caves,
In the saline air from the sea, in the Mendocino country,
With the surge for bass and accompaniment low and hoarse,
With crackling blows of axes, sounding musically, driven by strong arms,
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes—there in the Redwood forest dense,
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not—the camp shanties echoed not;
The quick-ear'd teamsters, and chain and jack-screw men, heard not,
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand years, to join the refrain;
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,
Down from its lofty top, rising two hundred feet high,[2]
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs—out of its foot-thick bark,
That chant of the seasons and time—chant, not of the past only, but the future.

[1] 1874 for "sky" reads "air."
[2] 1874 reads "over a hundred feet high."

3

You untold life of me,
And all you venerable and innocent joys,
Perennial, hardy life of me, with joys, 'mid rain, and many a summer sun,
And the white snows, and night, and the wild winds;
O the great patient, rugged joys! my soul's strong joys, unreck'd by man;
(For know I bear the soul befitting me—I too have consciousness, identity,
And all the rocks and mountains have—and all the earth;)
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,
Our time, our term has come.

Nor yield we mournfully, majestic brothers,
We who have grandly fill'd our time;
With Nature's calm content, and tacit, huge delight,
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,
And leave the field for them.

For them predicted long,
For a superber Race—they too to grandly fill their time,
For them we abdicate—in them ourselves, ye forest kings!
In them these skies and airs—these mountain peaks—Shasta—Nevadas,
These huge, precipitous cliffs—this amplitude—these valleys grand—Yosemite,
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.

4

Then to a loftier strain,
Still prouder, more ecstatic, rose the chant,
As if the heirs, the Deities of the West,
Joining, with master-tongue, bore part.

Not wan from Asia's fetishes,
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and scaffolds every where,)
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes—peacefully builded thence,
These virgin lands—Lands of the Western Shore,
To the new Culminating Man—to you, the Empire New,
You, promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.

You occult, deep volitions,
You average Spiritual Manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on yourself—giving, not taking law,
You Womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life and love, and aught that comes from life and love,
You unseen Moral Essence of all the vast materials of America, (age upon age, working in Death the same as Life,)
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and mould the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,
You hidden National Will, lying in your abysms, conceal'd, but ever alert,
You past and present purposes, tenaciously pursued, may-be unconscious of yourselves,
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts, statutes, literatures,
Here build your homes for good—establish here—These areas entire, Lands of the Western Shore,
We pledge, we dedicate to you.

For man of you—your characteristic Race,
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow—here tower, proportionate to Nature,
Here climb the vast, pure spaces, unconfined, uncheck'd by wall or roof,
Here laugh with storm or sun—here joy—here patiently inure,
Here heed himself, unfold himself (not others' formulas heed)—here fill his time,
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,
To disappear, to serve.

Thus, on the northern coast,
In the echo of teamsters' calls, and the clinking chains, and the music of choppers' axes,
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek, the groan,
Such words combined from the Redwood-tree—as of wood-spirits' voices ecstatic, ancient and rustling,
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,
From the Cascade range to the Wasatch—or Idaho far, or Utah,
To the deities of the Modern henceforth yielding,

The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity—
the settlements, features all,
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

5

The flashing and golden pageant of California!
The sudden and gorgeous drama—the sunny and ample lands;
The long and varied stretch from Puget Sound to Colorado
south;
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air—valleys and mountain cliffs;
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow—the silent, cyclic
chemistry;
The slow and steady ages plodding—the unoccupied surface
ripening—the rich ores forming beneath;
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing every where;
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to
the whole world,
To India and China and Australia, and the thousand island
paradises of the Pacific;
Populous cities—the latest inventions—the steamers on the
rivers—the railroads—with many a thrifty farm, with
machinery,
And wool, and wheat, and the grape—and diggings of yellow
gold.

6

But more in you than these, Lands of the Western Shore!
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)
I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of years,
till now deferr'd,
Promis'd, to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the Race.

The New Society at last, proportionate to Nature,
In Man of you, more than your mountain peaks, or stalwart trees
imperial,
In Woman more, far more, than all your gold, or vines, or even
vital air.

Fresh come, to a New World indeed, yet long prepared,
I see the Genius of the Modern, child of the Real and Ideal,
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir
of the past so grand,
To build a grander future.

SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL.

(Commencement Poem, Tuft's College, Mass., June 17, 1874.)
Included in Centennial Songs, 1876.

1

COME, said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the Universal.

In this broad Earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed Perfection.

By every life a share, or more or less,
None born but it is born—conceal'd or unconceal'd, the seed is waiting.

2

Lo! keen-eyed, towering Science!
As from tall peaks the Modern overlooking,
Successive, absolute fiats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the Soul—above all science;
For it, has History gather'd like a husk around the globe;
For it, the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral roads, by long detours,
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)
For it, the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it, the Real to the Ideal tends.

For it, the mystic evolution;
Not the right only justified—what we call evil also justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,
From the huge, festering trunk—from craft and guile and tears,
Health to emerge, and joy—joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,
Out of the bad majority—the varied, countless frauds of men and States,

Electric, antiseptic yet—cleaving, suffusing all,
Only the good is universal.

3

Over the mountain growths, disease and sorrow,
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of Heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull, a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore, the final chorus sounding.

4

O the blest eyes! the happy hearts!
That see—that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth!

5

And thou, America!
For the Scheme's culmination—its Thought, and its Reality,
For these, (not for thyself,) Thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all;
Embracing, carrying, welcoming all, Thou too, by pathways broad and new,
To the Ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands—the grandeurs of the past,
Are not for Thee—but grandeurs of Thine own;
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all,
All eligible to all.

All, all for Immortality!
Love, like the light, silently wrapping all!
Nature's amelioration blessing all!
The blossoms, fruits of ages—orchards divine and certain;
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual Images ripening.

6

Give me, O God, to sing that thought!
Give me—give him or her I love, this quenchless faith
In Thy ensemble. Whatever else withheld, withhold not from us,
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space;
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?
Nay, but the lack of it the dream,
And, failing it, life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream.

SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS.

First published in Centennial Songs, 1876.

1

To-day a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the Seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal;
Of unnamed heroes in the ships—Of waves spreading and spreading, far as the eye can reach;
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing;
And out of these a chant, for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful, like a surge.

Of Sea-Captains young or old, and the Mates—and of all intrepid Sailors;
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise, nor death dismay,
Pick'd sparingly, without noise, by thee, old Ocean—chosen by thee,
Thou Sea, that pickest and cullest the race, in Time, and unitest Nations!
Suckled by thee, old husky Nurse—embodying thee!
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes, on water or on land, by ones or twos appearing,
Ever the stock preserv'd, and never lost, though rare—enough for seed preserv'd.)

2

Flaunt out O Sea, your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out, visible as ever, the various ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself, and for the soul of
man, one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven Signal, for all nations, emblem of man elate
above death,
Token of all brave captains, and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty;
Reminiscent of them—twined from all intrepid captains, young
or old;
A pennant universal, subtly waving, all time, o'er all brave
sailors,
All seas, all ships.

EIDÓLONS.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

I MET a Seer,
Passing the hues and objects of the world,
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,
To glean Eidólons.

Put in thy chants, said he,
No more the puzzling hour, nor day—nor segments, parts, put in,
Put first before the rest, as light for all, and entrance-song of all,
That of Eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning;
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle;
Ever the summit, and the merge at last, (to surely start again,)
Eidólons! Eidólons!

Ever the mutable!
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering;
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,
Issuing Eidólons!

Lo! I or you!
Or woman, man, or State, known or unknown,
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,
But really build Eidólons.

The ostent evanescent;
The substance of an artist's mood, or savan's studies long,
Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,
To fashion his Eidólon.

Of every human life,
(The units gather'd, posted—not a thought, emotion, deed, left out;)
The whole, or large or small, summ'd, added up,
In its Eidólon.

The old, old urge;
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo! newer, higher pinnacles;
From Science and the Modern still impell'd,
The old, old urge, Eidólons.

The present, now and here,
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,
Of aggregate and segregate, for only thence releasing,
To-day's Eidólons.

These, with the past,
Of vanish'd lands—of all the reigns of kings across the sea,
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailors' voyages,
Joining Eidólons.

Densities, growth, façades,
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,
Eidólons everlasting.

Exaltè, rapt, extatic,
The visible but their womb of birth,
Of orbic tendencies to shape, and shape, and shape,
The mighty Earth-Eidólon.

All space, all time,
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,
Swelling, collapsing, ending—serving their longer, shorter use,)
Fill'd with Eidólons only.

The noiseless myriads!
The infinite oceans where the rivers empty!

The separate, countless free identities, like eyesight;
The true realities, Eidólons.

Not this the World,
Nor these the Universes—they the Universes,
Purport and end—ever the permanent life of life,
Eidólons, Eidólons.

Beyond thy lectures, learn'd professor,
Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope, observer keen—beyond all mathematics,
Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy—beyond the chemist with his chemistry,
The entities of entities, Eidólons.

Unfix'd, yet fix'd;
Ever shall be—ever have been, and are,
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,
Eidólons, Eidólons, Eidólons.

The prophet and the bard,
Shall yet maintain themselves—in higher stages yet,
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy—interpret yet to them,
God, and Eidólons.

And thee, My Soul!
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations!
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,
Thy mates, Eidólons.

Thy Body permanent,
The Body lurking there within thy Body,
The only purport of the Form thou art—the real I myself,
An image, an Eidólon.

Thy very songs, not in thy songs;
No special strains to sing—none for itself;
But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,
A round, full-orb'd Eidólon.

PRAYER OF COLUMBUS.

First published in Harper's Magazine, March, 1871. Included in "Two Rivulets," 1876

IT was near the close of his indomitable and pious life—on his last voyage when nearly 70 years of age—that Columbus, to save his two remaining ships from foundering in the Caribbean Sea in a terrible storm, had to run them ashore on the Island of Jamaica—where, laid up for a long and miserable year—1503—he was taken very sick, had several relapses, his men revolted, and death seem'd daily imminent; though he was eventually rescued, and sent home to Spain to die, unrecognized, neglected and in want.....It is only ask'd, as preparation and atmosphere for the following lines, that the bare authentic facts be recall'd and realized, and nothing contributed by the fancy. See, the Antillean Island, with its florid skies and rich foliage and scenery, the waves beating the solitary sands, and the hulls of the ships in the distance. See, the figure of the great Admiral, walking the beach, as a stage, in this sublimest tragedy—for what tragedy, what poem, so piteous and majestic as the real scene?—and hear him uttering—as his mystical and religious soul surely utter'd, the ideas following—perhaps, in their equivalents, the very words.

A BATTER'D, wreck'd old man,
Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,
Pent by the sea, and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary months,
Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd, and nigh to death,
I take my way along the island's edge,
Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!
Haply, I may not live another day;
I can not rest, O God—I can not eat or drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,
Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee—commune with Thee,
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
(My long and crowded life of active work—not adoration merely;)
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth;
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations;
Thou knowest how, before I commenced, I devoted all to come to Thee;
Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows, and strictly kept them;
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee;
(In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,
Accepting all from Thee—as duly come from Thee.)

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of Thee,

Sailing the deep, or journeying the land for Thee;
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine—leaving results to Thee.

O I am sure they really come from Thee!
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
A message from the Heavens, whispering to me even in sleep,
These sped me on.

By me, and these, the work so far accomplish'd (for what has been, has been;)
By me Earth's elder, cloy'd and stifled lands, uncloy'd, unloos'd;
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied—the unknown to the known.

The end I know not—it is all in Thee;
Or small, or great, I know not—haply, what broad fields, what lands;
Haply, the brutish, measureless human undergrowth I know,
Transplanted there, may rise to stature, knowledge worthy Thee;
Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to reaping-tools;
Haply the lifeless cross I know—Europe's dead cross—may bud and blossom there.

One effort more—my altar this bleak sand:
That Thou, O God, my life hast lighted,
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,
(Light rare, untellable—lighting the very light!
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages!)
For that, O God—be it my latest word—here on my knees,
Old, poor, and paralyzed—I thank Thee.

My terminus near,
The clouds already closing in upon me,
The voyage balk'd—the course disputed, lost,
I yield my ships to Thee.

Steersman unseen! henceforth the helms are Thine;
Take Thou command—(what to my petty skill Thy navigation?)

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless;
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd;
Let the old timbers part—I will not part!
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me;
Thee, Thee, at least, I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?
What do I know of life? what of myself?
I know not even my own work, past or present;
Dim, ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
Of newer, better worlds, their mighty parturition,
Mocking, perplexing me.

And these things I see suddenly—what mean they?
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,
Shadowy, vast shapes, smile through the air and sky,
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

SPAIN, 1873–'74.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

Out of the murk of heaviest clouds,
Out of the feudal wrecks, and heap'd-up skeletons of kings,
Out of that old entire European debris—the shatter'd mummeries,
Ruin'd cathedrals, crumble of palaces, tombs of priests,
Lo! Freedom's features, fresh, undimm'd, look forth—the same immortal face looks forth;
(A glimpse as of thy mother's face, Columbia,
A flash significant as of a sword,
Beaming towards thee.)

Nor think we forget thee, Maternal;
Lag'd'st thou so long? Shall the clouds close again upon thee?
Ah, but thou hast Thyself now appear'd to us—we know thee;
Thou hast given us a sure proof, the glimpse of Thyself;
Thou waitest there, as everywhere, thy time.

OUT FROM BEHIND THIS MASK.

To confront a Portrait. Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876

1

Out from behind this bending, rough-cut Mask,
(All straighter, liker Masks rejected—this preferr'd,)
This common curtain of the face, contain'd in me for me, in you for you, in each for each,
(Tragedies, sorrows, laughter, tears—O heaven!
The passionate, teeming plays this curtain hid!)
This glaze of God's serenest, purest sky,
This film of Satan's seething pit,
This heart's geography's map—this limitless small continent—this soundless sea;
Out from the convolutions of this globe,
This subtler astronomic orb than sun or moon—than Jupiter, Venus, Mars;
This condensation of the Universe—(nay, here the only Universe,
Here the Idea—all in this mystic handful wrapt;)
These burin'd eyes, flashing to you, to pass to future time,
To launch and spin through space revolving, sideling—from these to emanate,
To You, whoe'er you are—a Look.

2

A Traveler of thoughts and years—of peace and war,
Of youth long sped, and middle age declining,
(As the first volume of a tale perused and laid away, and this the second,
Songs, ventures, speculations, presently to close,)
Lingering a moment, here and now, to You I opposite turn,
As on the road, or at some crevice door, by chance, or open'd window,
Pausing, inclining, baring my head, You specially I greet,
To draw and clench your Soul, for once, inseparably with mine,
Then travel, travel on.

TO A LOCOMOTIVE IN WINTER.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

THEE for my recitative!
Thee in the driving storm, even as now—the snow—the winter-day declining;
Thee in thy panoply, thy measured dual throbbing, and thy beat convulsive;
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass, and silvery steel;
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides;
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar—now tapering in the distance;
Thy great protruding head-light, fix'd in front;
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple;
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack;
Thy knitted frame—thy springs and valves—the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels;
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily-following,
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering:
Type of the modern! emblem of motion and power! pulse of the continent!
For once, come serve the Muse, and merge in verse, even as here I see thee,
With storm, and buffeting gusts of wind, and falling snow;
By day, thy warning, ringing bell to sound its notes,
By night, thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!
Roll through my chant, with all thy lawless music! thy swinging lamps at night;
Thy piercing, madly-whistled laughter! thy echoes, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all!
Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding;
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide—across the lakes,
To the free skies, unpent, and glad, and strong.

THE OX TAMER.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

In a faraway northern county, in the placid, pastoral region,
Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a famous Tamer of Oxen:
There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-olds, to break them;
He will take the wildest steer in the world, and break him and tame him;
He will go, fearless, without any whip, where the young bullock chafes up and down the yard;
The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air, with raging eyes;
Yet, see you! how soon his rage subsides—how soon this Tamer tames him:
See you! on the farms hereabout, a hundred oxen, young and old—and he is the man who has tamed them;
They all know him—all are affectionate to him;
See you! some are such beautiful animals—so lofty looking!
Some are buff color'd—some mottled—one has a white line running along his back—some are brindled,
Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—See you! the bright hides;
See, the two with stars on their foreheads—See, the round bodies and broad backs;
See, how straight and square they stand on their legs—See, what fine, sagacious eyes;
See, how they watch their Tamer—they wish him near them—how they turn to look after him!
What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he moves away from them:
—Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books, politics, poems depart—all else departs;)
I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate friend,
Whom a hundred oxen love, there in his life on farms,
In the northern county far, in the placid, pastoral region.

WANDERING AT MORN.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

WANDERING at morn,
Emerging from the night, from gloomy thoughts—thee in my thoughts,
Yearning for thee, harmonious Union! thee, Singing Bird divine!
Thee, seated coil'd in evil times, my Country, with craft and black dismay—with every meanness, treason thrust upon thee;
—Wandering—this common marvel I beheld—the parent thrush I watch'd, feeding its young,
(The singing thrush, whose tones of joy and faith ecstatic,
Fail not to certify and cheer my soul.)

There ponder'd, felt I,
If worms, snakes, loathsome grubs, may to sweet spiritual songs be turn'd,
If vermin so transposed, so used, so bless'd may be,
Then may I trust in you, your fortunes, days, my country;
—Who knows that these may be the lessons fit for you?
From these your future Song may rise, with joyous trills,
Destin'd to fill the world.

AN OLD MAN'S THOUGHT OF SCHOOL.

(Recited for the inauguration of a New Public School, Camden, New Jersey, Oct. 31, 1874.)

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

AN old man's thought of School;
An old man, gathering youthful memories and blooms, that youth itself cannot.

Now only do I know you!
O fair auroral skies! O morning dew upon the grass!

And these I see—these sparkling eyes,
These stores of mystic meaning—these young lives,
Building, equipping, like a fleet of ships—immortal ships!
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,
On the Soul's voyage.

Only a lot of boys and girls?
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?
Only a Public School?

Ah more—infinitely more;
(As George Fox rais'd his warning cry, "Is it this pile of brick and mortar—these dead floors, windows, rails—you call the church?
Why this is not the church at all—the Church is living, ever living Souls.")

And you, America,
Cast you the real reckoning for your present?
The lights and shadows of your future—good or evil?
To girlhood, boyhood look—the Teacher and the School.

WITH ALL THY GIFTS.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

With all thy gifts, America,
(Standing secure, rapidly tending, overlooking the world,)
Power, wealth, extent, vouchsafed to thee—With these, and like of these, vouchsafed to thee,
What if one gift thou lackest? (the ultimate human problem never solving;)
The gift of Perfect Women fit for thee—What of that gift of gifts thou lackest?
The towering Feminine of thee? the beauty, health, completion, fit for thee?
The Mothers fit for thee?

AFTER THE SEA-SHIP.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

After the Sea-Ship—after the whistling winds;
After the white-gray sails, taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves, hastening, lifting up their necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship:
Waves of the ocean, bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,
Waves, undulating waves—liquid, uneven, emulous waves,

Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with curves,
Where the great Vessel, sailing and tacking, displaced the surface;
Larger and smaller waves, in the spread of the ocean, yearnfully flowing;
The wake of the Sea-Ship, after she passes—flashing and frolicsome, under the sun,
A motley procession, with many a fleck of foam, and many fragments,
Following the stately and rapid Ship—in the wake following.

NOW FINALE TO THE SHORE.

NOW FINALE TO THE SHORE.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

Now finale to the shore!
Now, land and life, finale, and farewell!
Now Voyager depart! (much, much for thee is yet in store;)
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,
Cautiously cruising, studying the charts,
Duly again to port, and hawser's tie, returning:
—But now obey, thy cherish'd, secret wish,
Embrace thy friends—leave all in order;
To port, and hawser's tie, no more returning,
Depart upon thy endless cruise, old Sailor!

SHUT NOT YOUR DOORS, Etc.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

SHUT not your doors to me, proud libraries,
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet needed most, I bring;[1]
Forth from the army, the war emerging—a book I have made,[2]
The words of my book nothing—the drift[3] of it everything;
A book separate, not link'd with the rest, nor felt by the intellect,[4]
But you, ye untold latencies, will thrill to every page;

[1] Drum-Taps reads "which was lacking among you all, yet needed," etc.

[2] Drum-Taps. For line 3 reads "A book I have made for your dear sake, O Soldiers,
And for you, O soul of man, and you, love of comrades."

[3] Drum-Taps. For "drift" reads "life."

[4] After line 5, Drum-Taps reads "But you will feel every word, O Libertad! Arm'd Libertad!
It shall pass by the intellect to swim the sea, the air,
With joy with you, O soul of Man."

Through Space and Time fused in a chant, and the flowing, eternal Identity,
To Nature, encompassing these, encompassing God—to the joyous, electric All,
To the sense of Death—and accepting, exulting in Death, in its turn, the same as life,
The entrance of Man I sing.[1]

THOUGHT.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

As they draw to a close,
Of what underlies the precedent songs—of my aims in them;
Of the seed I have sought to plant in them;
Of joy, sweet joy, through many a year, in them;
(For them—for them have I lived—In them my work is done;)
Of many an aspiration fond—of many a dream and plan,
Of you, O mystery great!—to place on record faith in you, O death!
—To compact you, ye parted, diverse lives!
To put rapport the mountains, and rocks, and streams,
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak and pine,
With you, O soul of man.

THE UNTOLD WANT.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

The untold want, by life and land ne'er granted,
Now, Voyager, sail thou forth, to seek and find.

PORTALS.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

What are those of the known, but to ascend and enter the Unknown?
And what are those of life, but for Death?

[1] Lines 6–10. Added in "Passage to India," 1870.

THESE CAROLS.

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

THESE Carols, sung to cheer my passage through the world I see,
For completion, I dedicate to the Invisible World.

WHAT PLACE IS BESIEGED?

First published in 1860 as part of "Calamus," 31.

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?
Lo! I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal;
And with him horse and foot—and parks of artillery,
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY!

First published in "Passage to India," 1870.

JOY! shipmate—joy!
(Pleas'd to my Soul at death I cry;)
Our life is closed—our life begins;
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last—she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore;
Joy! shipmate—joy!

GATHERED LEAVES.

APOSTROPH.

First published in 1860.

O MATER ! O fils !
O brood continental !
O flowers of the prairies !
O space boundless ! O hum of mighty products !
O you teeming cities ! O so invincible, turbulent, proud !
O race of the future ! O women !
O fathers ! O you men of passion and the storm !
O native power only ! O beauty !
O yourself ! O God ! O divine average !
O you bearded roughs ! O bards ! O all those slumberers !
O arouse ! the dawn-bird's throat sounds shrill ! Do you not hear the cock crowing ?
O, as I walk'd the beach, I heard the mournful notes foreboding a tempest—the low, oft-repeated shriek of the diver, the long-lived loon ;
O I heard, and yet hear, angry thunder ;—O you sailors ! O ships ! make quick preparation !
O from his masterful sweep, the warning cry of the eagle !
(Give way there, all ! It is useless ! Give up your spoils ;)
O sarcasms ! Propositions ! (O if the whole world should prove indeed a sham, a sell !)
O I believe there is nothing real but America and freedom !
O to sternly reject all except Democracy !
O imperator ! O who dare confront you and me ?
O to promulgate our own ! O to build for that which builds for mankind !
O feuillage ! O North ! O the slope drained by the Mexican sea !
O all, all inseparable—ages, ages, ages !
O a curse on him that would dissever this Union for any reason whatever !
O climates, labors ! O good and evil ! O death !
O you strong with iron and wood ! O Personality !

O the village or place which has the greatest man or woman! even if it be only a few ragged huts;
O the city where women walk in public processions in the streets, the same as the men;
O a wan and terrible emblem, by me adopted!
O shapes arising! shapes of the future centuries!
O muscle and pluck forever for me!
O workmen and workwomen forever for me!
O farmers and sailors! O drivers of horses forever for me!
O I will make the new bardic list of trades and tools!
O you coarse and wilful! I love you!
O South! O longings for my dear home! O soft and sunny airs!
O pensive! O I must return where the palm grows and the mocking-bird sings, or else I die!
O equality! O organic compacts! I am come to be your born poet!
O whirl, contest, sounding and resounding! I am your poet, because I am part of you;
O days by-gone! Enthusiasts! Antecedents!
O vast preparations for These States! O years!
O what is now being sent forward thousands of years to come!
O mediums! O to teach! to convey the invisible faith!
To promulge real things! to journey through all The States!
O creation! O to-day! O laws! O unmitigated adoration!
O for mightier broods of orators, artists, and singers!
O for native songs! carpenter's, boatman's, ploughman's songs! shoemaker's songs!
O haughtiest growth of time! O free and extatic!
O what I, here, preparing, warble for!
O you hastening light! O the sun of the world will ascend, dazzling, and take his height—and you too will ascend;
O so amazing and so broad! up there resplendent, darting and burning;
O prophetic! O vision staggered with weight of light! with pouring glories!
O copious! O hitherto unequalled!
O Libertad! O compact! O union impossible to dissever!
O my Soul! O lips becoming tremulous, powerless!
O centuries, centuries yet ahead!
O voices of greater orators! I pause—I listen for you
O you States! Cities! defiant of all outside authority! I spring at once into your arms! you I most love!
O you grand Presidentiads! I wait for you!

New history! New heroes! I project you!
Visions of poets! only you really last! O sweep on! sweep on!
O Death! O you striding there! O I cannot yet!
O heights! O infinitely too swift and dizzy yet!
O purged lumine! you threaten me more than I can stand!
O present! I return while yet I may to you!
O poets to come, I depend upon you!

O SUN OF REAL PEACE.

First published in 1860 as part of "Apostroph." See line 49 of that poem. Published under present title in 1867.

O SUN of real peace![1] O hastening light!
O free and extatic! O what I here, preparing, warble for!
O the sun of the world will ascend, dazzling, and take his height
—and you too, O my Ideal,[2] will surely ascend!
O so amazing and broad—up there resplendent, darting and burning!
O vision prophetic, stagger'd with weight of light! with pouring glories!
O lips of my soul, already becoming powerless!
O ample and grand Presidentiads! Now the war, the war is over![3]
New history! new heroes! I project you!
Visions of poets! only you really last! sweep on! sweep on!
O heights too swift and dizzy yet!
O purged and luminous! you threaten me more than I can stand!
(I must not venture—the ground under my feet menaces me—it will not support me:
O future too immense,)[4]—O present, I return, while yet I may, to you.

[1] "O sun of real peace" added in 1870.
[2] "O my Ideal" added in 1870.
[3] "Now the war, the war is over!" added in 1870.
[4] "O future too immense" added in 1870.

O BITTER SPRIG! CONFESSION SPRIG!

In 1860 these verses begin the Poem "You Felons on Trial in Courts." See page 238.

O BITTER sprig! Confession sprig!
In the bouquet I give you place also—I bind you in,
Proceeding no further till, humbled publicly,
I give fair warning, once for all.

I own that I have been sly, thievish, mean, a prevaricator, greedy, derelict,
And I own that I remain so yet.

What foul thought but I think it—or have in me the stuff out of which it is thought?
What in darkness in bed at night, alone or with a companion?

SO FAR AND SO FAR, AND ON TOWARD THE END.

Published in edition of 1860.

So far, and so far, and on toward the end,
Singing what is sung in this book, from the irresistible impulses of me;
But whether I continue beyond this book, to maturity,
Whether I shall dart forth the true rays, the ones that wait unfired,
(Did you think the sun was shining its brightest?
No—it has not yet fully risen;)
Whether I shall complete what is here started,
Whether I shall attain my own height, to justify these, yet unfinished,
Whether I shall make THE POEM OF THE NEW WORLD, transcending all others—depends, rich persons, upon you,
Depends, whoever you are now filling the current Presidentiad, upon you,
Upon you, Governor, Mayor, Congressman,
And you, contemporary America.

IN THE NEW GARDEN IN ALL THE PARTS.

Published in edition of 1860.

In the new garden, in all the parts,
In cities now, modern, I wander,
Though the second or third result, or still further, primitive yet,
Days, places, indifferent—though various, the same,
Time, Paradise, the Mannahatta, the prairies, finding me unchanged,
Death indifferent—Is it that I lived long since? Was I buried very long ago?
For all that, I may now be watching you here, this moment;
For the future, with determined will, I seek—the woman of the future,
You, born years, centuries after me, I seek.

STATES!

Published in 1860, in which edition the poem concludes with verses published in 1870 under title of "A Song." See page 123.

States!
Were you looking to be held together by the lawyers?
By an agreement on a paper? Or by arms?

Away!
I arrive, bringing these, beyond all the forces of courts and arms,
These! to hold you together as firmly as the earth itself is held together.

The old breath of life, ever new,
Here! I pass it by contact to you, America.

O mother! have you done much for me?
Behold, there shall from me be much done for you.

There shall from me be a new friendship—It shall be called after my name,
It shall circulate through The States, indifferent of place,
It shall twist and intertwist them through and around each other
—Compact shall they be, showing new signs,
Affection shall solve every one of the problems of freedom,

Those who love each other shall be invincible,
They shall finally make America completely victorious, in my name.

One from Massachusetts shall be comrade to a Missourian,
One from Maine or Vermont, and a Carolinian and an Oregonese, shall be friends triune, more precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.

To Michigan shall be wafted perfume from Florida,
To the Mannahatta from Cuba or Mexico,
Not the perfume of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond death.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,
If need be, a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for one,
The Kanuck shall be willing to lay down his life for the Kansian, and the Kansian for the Kanuck, on due need.

It shall be customary in all directions, in the houses and streets, to see manly affection,
The departing brother or friend shall salute the remaining brother or friend with a kiss.

There shall be innovations,
There shall be countless linked hands—namely, the Northeasterner's, and the Northwesterner's, and the Southwesterner's, and those of the interior, and all their brood,
These shall be masters of the world under a new power,
They shall laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder of the world.

The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly,
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie and band stronger than hoops of iron,
I, extatic, O partners! O lands! henceforth with the love of lovers tie you.

LONG I THOUGHT THAT KNOWLEDGE.

Published in 1860.

Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me —O if I could but obtain knowledge!

Then my lands engrossed me—Lands of the prairies, Ohio's land, the southern savannas, engrossed me—For them I would live—I would be their orator;

Then I met the examples of old and new heroes—I heard of warriors, sailors, and all dauntless persons—And it seemed to me that I too had it in me to be as dauntless as any—and would be so;

And then, to enclose all, it came to me to strike up the songs of the New World—And then I believed my life must be spent in singing;

But now take notice, land of the prairies, land of the south savannas, Ohio's land,

Take notice, you Kanuck woods—and you Lake Huron—and all that with you roll toward Niagara—and you Niagara also,

And you, Californian mountains—That you each and all find somebody else to be your singer of songs,

For I can be your singer of songs no longer—One who loves me is jealous of me, and withdraws me from all but love,

With the rest I dispense—I sever from what I thought would suffice me, for it does not—it is now empty and tasteless to me,

I heed knowledge, and the grandeur of The States, and the example of heroes, no more,

I am indifferent to my own songs—I will go with him I love,

It is to be enough for us that we are together—We never separate again.

HOURS CONTINUING LONG, SORE AND HEAVY-HEARTED.

Published in 1860.

Hours continuing long, sore and heavy-hearted,

Hours of the dusk, when I withdraw to a lonesome and unfrequented spot, seating myself, leaning my face in my hands;

Hours sleepless, deep in the night, when I go forth, speeding swiftly the country roads, or through the city streets, or pacing miles and miles, stifling plaintive cries;

Hours discouraged, distracted—for the one I cannot content myself without, soon I saw him content himself without me;
Hours when I am forgotten, (O weeks and months are passing, but I believe I am never to forget!)
Sullen and suffering hours! (I am ashamed—but it is useless—I am what I am;)
Hours of my torment—I wonder if other men ever have the like, out of the like feelings?
Is there even one other like me—distracted—his friend, his lover, lost to him?
Is he too as I am now? Does he still rise in the morning, dejected, thinking who is lost to him? and at night, awaking, think who is lost?
Does he too harbor his friendship silent and endless? harbor his anguish and passion?
Does some stray reminder, or the casual mention of a name, bring the fit back upon him, taciturn and deprest?
Does he see himself reflected in me? In these hours, does he see the face of his hours reflected?

WHO IS NOW READING THIS?

Published in 1860.

Who is now reading this?

May-be one is now reading this who knows some wrong-doing of my past life,
Or may-be a stranger is reading this who has secretly loved me,
Or may-be one who meets all my grand assumptions and egotisms with derision,
Or may-be one who is puzzled at me.

As if I were not puzzled at myself!
Or as if I never deride myself! (O conscience-struck! O self-convicted!)
Or as if I do not secretly love strangers! (O tenderly, a long time, and never avow it;)
Or as if I did not see, perfectly well, interior in myself, the stuff of wrong-doing,
Or as if it could cease transpiring from me until it must cease.

PRIMEVAL MY LOVE FOR THE WOMAN I LOVE.

Published in 1860.

PRIMEVAL my love for the woman I love,
O bride! O wife! more resistless, more enduring than I can tell, the thought of you!
Then separate, as disembodied, the purest born,
The ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,
I ascend—I float in the regions of your love, O man,
O sharer of my roving life.

TO YOU.

Published in 1860 and 1867.

LET us twain walk aside from the rest;
Now we are together privately, do you discard ceremony,
Come! vouchsafe to me what has yet been vouchsafed to none —Tell me the whole story,
Tell me what you would not tell your brother, wife, husband, or physician.

OF THE VISAGES OF THINGS.

Published in 1860 and 1867.

OF the visages of things—And of piercing through to the accepted hells beneath;
Of ugliness—To me there is just as much in it as there is in beauty —And now the ugliness of human beings is acceptable to me;
Of detected persons—To me, detected persons are not, in any respect, worse than undetected persons—and are not in any respect worse than I am myself;
Of criminals—To me, any judge, or any juror, is equally criminal—and any reputable person is also—and the President is also.

SAYS.

First published in 1860. In 1867 Stanzas 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 are discarded, but title retained. In 1870, part retained is published under title of "Suggestions."

I

I SAY whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person, that is finally right.

2

I say nourish a great intellect, a great brain;
If I have said anything to the contrary, I hereby retract it.

3

I say man shall not hold property in man;
I say the least developed person on earth is just as important and sacred to himself or herself, as the most developed person is to himself or herself.

4

I say where liberty draws not the blood out of slavery, there slavery draws the blood out of liberty,
I say the word of the good old cause in These States, and resound it hence over the world.

5

I say the human shape or face is so great, it must never be made ridiculous;
I say for ornaments nothing outre can be allowed,
And that anything is most beautiful without ornament,
And that exaggerations will be sternly revenged in your own physiology, and in other persons' physiology also;
And I say that clean-shaped children can be jetted and conceived only where natural forms prevail in public, and the human face and form are never caricatured;
And I say that genius need never more be turned to romances,
(For facts properly told, how mean appear all romances.)

6

I say the word of lands fearing nothing—I will have no other land;
I say discuss all and expose all—I am for every topic openly;
I say there can be no salvation for These States without innovators—without free tongues, and ears willing to hear the tongues;
And I announce as a glory of These States, that they respectfully listen to propositions, reforms, fresh views and doctrines, from successions of men and women,
Each age with its own growth.

7

I have said many times that materials and the Soul are great, and that all depends on physique;
Now I reverse what I said, and affirm that all depends on the æsthetic or intellectual,
And that criticism is great—and that refinement is greatest of all;
And I affirm now that the mind governs—and that all depends on the mind.

8

With one man or woman—(no matter which one—I even pick out the lowest,)
With him or her I now illustrate the whole law;
I say that every right, in politics or what-not, shall be eligible to that one man or woman, on the same terms as any.

DEBRIS.

Published in 1860 and 1867.

He is wisest who has the most caution,
He only wins who goes far enough.

Any thing is as good as established, when that is established that will produce it and continue it.

WHAT GENERAL HAS A GOOD ARMY.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

What General has a good army in himself, has a good army;
He happy in himself, or she happy in herself, is happy,
But I tell you you cannot be happy by others, any more than you can beget or conceive a child by others.

DESPAIRING CRIES.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860; in 1867 under this title.

1

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me, day and night,
The sad voice of Death—the call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarmed, uncertain,

This sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,
Come tell me where I am speeding—tell me my destination.

2

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,
I approach, hear, behold—the sad mouth, the look out of the eyes, your mute inquiry,
Whither I go from the bed I now recline on, come tell me;
Old age, alarmed, uncertain—A young woman's voice appealing to me, for comfort,
A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape?*

ONE SWEEPS BY.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

One sweeps by, attended by an immense train,
All emblematic of peace—not a soldier or menial among them.

One sweeps by, old, with black eyes, and profuse white hair,
He has the simple magnificence of health and strength,
His face strikes as with flashes of lightning whoever it turns toward.

Three old men slowly pass, followed by three others, and they by three others,
They are beautiful—the one in the middle of each group holds his companions by the hand,
As they walk, they give out perfume wherever they walk.

WHAT WEEPING FACE.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

What weeping face is that looking from the window?
Why does it stream those sorrowful tears?
Is it for some burial place, vast and dry?
Is it to wet the soil of graves?

I WILL TAKE AN EGG OUT OF THE ROBIN'S NEST.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

I WILL take an egg out of the robin's nest in the orchard,
I will take a branch of gooseberries from the old bush in the garden, and go and preach to the world;
You shall see I will not meet a single heretic or scorner,
You shall see how I stump clergymen, and confound them,
You shall see me showing a scarlet tomato, and a white pebble from the beach.

BEHAVIOR.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

BEHAVIOR—fresh, native, copious, each one for himself or herself,
Nature and the Soul expressed—America and freedom expressed—In it the finest art,
In it pride, cleanliness, sympathy, to have their chance,
In it physique, intellect, faith—in it just as much as to manage an army or a city, or to write a book—perhaps more,
The youth, the laboring person, the poor person, rivalling all the rest—perhaps outdoing the rest,
The effects of the universe no greater than its;
For there is nothing in the whole universe that can be more effective than a man's or woman's daily behavior can be,
In any position, in any one of These States.

I THOUGHT I WAS NOT ALONE.

Published as part of "Debris" in 1860.

I THOUGHT I was not alone, walking here by the shore,
But the one I thought was with me, as now I walk by the shore,
As I lean and look through the glimmering light—that one has utterly disappeared,
And those appear that perplex me.

INSCRIPTION.

First published in 1867; not again published till 1888.

SMALL is the theme of the following Chant, yet the greatest—namely, One's-Self—that wondrous thing a simple, separate person. That, for the use of the New World, I sing.

Man's physiology complete, from top to toe, I sing. Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the muse; —I say the Form complete is worthier far. The female equal with the male, I sing,
Nor cease at the theme of One's-Self. I speak the word of the modern, the word En-Masse:
My Days I sing, and the Lands—with interstice I knew of hapless War.

O friend whoe'er you are, at last arriving hither to commence, I feel through every leaf the pressure of your hand, which I return. And thus upon our journey link'd together let us go.

NOT MY ENEMIES EVER INVADE ME.

Published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

Not my enemies ever invade me—no harm to my pride from them I fear;
But the lovers I recklessly love—lo! how they master me!
Lo! me, ever open and helpless, bereft of my strength!
Utterly abject, grovelling on the ground before them.

GREAT ARE THE MYTHS.

First published in 1855. In edition of 1856 under title of "Poem of a few Greatnesses." In 1860 as No. 2 "Leaves of Grass," page 199. In 1867 '70 under title as above.

I

Great are the myths—I too delight in them;
Great are Adam and Eve—I too look back and accept them;
Great the risen and fallen nations, and their poets, women, sages, inventors, rulers, warriors, and priests.

Great is Liberty! great is Equality! I am their follower;
Helmsmen of nations, choose your craft! where you sail, I sail,[1]
I weather it out with you, or sink with you.[2]

Great is Youth—equally great is Old Age—great are the Day and Night;
Great is Wealth—great is Poverty—great is Expression—great is Silence.

Youth, large, lusty, loving—Youth, full of grace, force, fascination!
Do you know that Old Age may come after you, with equal grace, force, fascination?

Day, full-blown and splendid—Day of the immense sun, action, ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close, with millions of suns, and sleep, and restoring darkness.

Wealth, with the flush hand, fine clothes, hospitality;
But then the Soul's wealth, which is candor, knowledge, pride, enfolding love;
(Who goes for men and women showing Poverty richer than wealth?)

Expression of speech! in what is written or said, forget not that Silence is also expressive,
That anguish as hot as the hottest, and contempt as cold as the coldest, may be without words.[3]

[1] 1855 '56 '60 after line 5 read:
"Yours is the muscle of life or death—yours is the perfect science—in you I have absolute faith.

Great is To-day, and beautiful,
It is good to live in this age—there never was any better.

Great are the plunges, throes, triumphs, downfalls of Democracy,
Great the reformers, with their lapses and screams,
Great the daring and venture of sailors, on new explorations.

Great are Yourself and Myself,
We are just as good and bad as the oldest and youngest or any,
What the best and worst did, we could do,
What they felt, do not we feel it in ourselves?
What they wished, do we not wish the same?"

[2] Line 6 added in 1867.

[3] 1855 '56 '60. After line 17 read "That the true adoration is likewise without words and without kneeling.
Great is the greatest Nation—the nation of clusters of equal nations."

2

Great is the Earth, and the way it became what it is;
Do you imagine it has stopt at this? the increase abandon'd?
Understand then that it goes as far onward from this, as this is from the times when it lay in covering waters and gases, before man had appear'd.[1]

Great is the quality of Truth in man;
The quality of truth in man supports itself through all changes,
It is inevitably in the man—he and it are in love, and never leave each other.

The truth in man is no dictum, it is vital as eyesight;
If there be any Soul, there is truth—if there be man or woman there is truth—if there be physical or moral, there is truth;
If there be equilibrium or volition, there is truth—if there be things at all upon the earth, there is truth.

O truth of the earth! I am determin'd to press my way toward you;[2]
Sound your voice! I scale mountains, or dive in the sea after you.

3

Great is Language—it is the mightiest of the sciences,
It is the fulness, color, form, diversity of the earth, and of men and women, and of all qualities and processes;
It is greater than wealth—it is greater than buildings, ships, religions, paintings, music.

Great is the English speech—what speech is so great as the English?
Great is the English brood—what brood has so vast a destiny as the English?
It is the mother of the brood that must rule the earth with the new rule;
The new rule shall rule as the Soul rules, and as the love, justice, equality in the Soul rule.

[1] "before man had appear'd" added in 1860.

[2] 1855 '56 read "O truth of the earth! O truth of things! I am determined to press my whole way toward you." 1860 '67 read "O truth of the earth! O truth of things! I am determined to press my way toward you."

Great is Law—great are the few old[1] land-marks of the law.
They are the same in all times, and shall not be disturb'd.[2]

4

Great is Justice!
Justice is not settled by legislators and laws—it is in the Soul;
It cannot be varied by statutes, any more than love, pride, the attraction of gravity, can;
It is immutable—it does not depend on majorities—majorities or what not, come at last before the same passionless and exact tribunal.

For justice are the grand natural lawyers, and perfect judges—is it[3] in their Souls;
It is well assorted—they have not studied for nothing—the great includes the less;
They rule on the highest grounds—they oversee all eras, states, administrations.

The perfect judge fears nothing—he could go front to front before God;
Before the perfect judge all shall stand back—life and death shall stand back—heaven and hell shall stand back.[4]

5

Great is Life, real and mystical, wherever and whoever;
Great is Death—sure as life holds all parts together, Death holds all parts together.

Has Life much purport?—Ah, Death has the greatest purport.

[1] 1855 '56 '60 '67 for "few old" read "old few."
[2] 1855 '56. After line 37 read "Great are marriage, commerce, newspapers, books, free-trade, railroads, steamers, international mails, telegraphs, exchanges." 1860 reads as above, omitting "marriage."
[3] 1855 '56 '60 for "is it" read "it is."
[4] After line 46, 1855 '56 '60 read:
"Great is Goodness!
I do not know what it is, any more than I know what health is—but I know it is great.

Great is Wickedness—I find I often admire it, just as much as I admire goodness.
Do you call that a paradox? It certainly is a paradox.

POEM OF REMEMBRANCE FOR A GIRL OR A BOY OF THESE STATES.

First published in 1856.

You just maturing youth! You male or female!
Remember the organic compact of These States,
Remember the pledge of the Old Thirteen thenceforward to the rights, life, liberty, equality of man,
Remember what was promulged by the founders, ratified by The States, signed in black and white by the Commissioners, and read by Washington at the head of the army,
Remember the purposes of the founders,—Remember Washington;
Remember the copious humanity streaming from every direction toward America;
Remember the hospitality that belongs to nations and men; (Cursed be nation, woman, man, without hospitality!)
Remember, government is to subserve individuals,
Not any, not the President, is to have one jot more than you or me,
Not any habitan of America is to have one jot less than you or me.

Anticipate when the thirty or fifty millions, are to become the hundred, or two hundred millions, of equal freemen and freewomen, amicably joined.

Recall ages—One age is but a part—ages are but a part;

The eternal equilibrium of things is great, and the eternal overthrow of things is great,
And there is another paradox.

Great is Life, real and mystical, wherever and whoever,
Great is Death—sure as Life holds all parts together, Death holds all parts together.[1]

1855 closes poem with "Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light, death is great as life." 1856 '60 omit above line and add:
"Death has just as much purport as Life has.
Do you enjoy what Life confers? you shall enjoy what Death confers.
I do not understand the realities of Death, but I know they are great;
I do not understand the least reality of Life—how then can I understand the realities of Death?"

[1] Line 1 added in 1860.

Recall the angers, bickerings, delusions, superstitions, of the idea of caste,
Recall the bloody cruelties and crimes.

Anticipate the best women ;
I say an unnumbered new race of hardy and well-defined women are to spread through all These States,
I say a girl fit for These States must be free, capable, dauntless, just the same as a boy.

Anticipate your own life—retract with merciless power,
Shirk nothing—retract in time—Do you see those errors, diseases, weaknesses, lies, thefts?
Do you see that lost character?—Do you see decay, consumption, rum-drinking, dropsy, fever, mortal cancer or inflammation?
Do you see death, and the approach of death?

THINK OF THE SOUL.

First published in 1856. In that edition and in 1860 it is a continuation of "Poem of Remembrance," that part being discarded in the 1870 edition.

THINK of the Soul ;
I swear to you that body of yours gives proportions to your Soul somehow to live in other spheres ;
I do not know how, but I know it is so.

Think of loving and being loved ;
I swear to you, whoever you are, you can interfuse yourself with such things that everybody that sees you shall look longingly upon you.

Think of the past ;
I warn you that in a little while others will find their past in you and your times.

The race is never separated—nor man nor woman escapes ;
All is inextricable—things, spirits, Nature, nations, you too—from precedents you come.

Recall the ever-welcome defiers, (The mothers precede them ;)
Recall the sages, poets, saviors, inventors, lawgivers, of the earth ;

Recall Christ, brother of rejected persons—brother of slaves, felons, idiots, and of insane and diseas'd persons.

Think of the time when you were not yet born;
Think of times you stood at the side of the dying;
Think of the time when your own body will be dying.

Think of spiritual results,
Sure as the earth swims through the heavens, does every one of its objects pass into spiritual results.

Think of manhood, and you to be a man;
Do you count manhood, and the sweet of manhood, nothing?

Think of womanhood, and you to be a woman;
The creation is womanhood;
Have I not said that womanhood involves all?
Have I not told how the universe has nothing better than the best womanhood?

RESPONDEZ!

First published in 1856 under title of "Poem of the Proposition of Nakedness;" in 1860 as No. 5, "Chants Democratic;" in 1867 '70 under this title.

RESPONDEZ! Respondez!
(The war is completed—the price is paid—the title is settled beyond recall;)[1]
Let every one answer! let those who sleep be waked! let none evade![2]
Must we still go on with our affectations and sneaking?[3]
Let me bring this to a close—I pronounce openly for a new distribution of roles;[4]
Let that which stood in front go behind! and let that which was behind advance to the front and speak;
Let murderers, bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions!

[1] Line 2 added in 1870.
[2] 1856 '60 add "not you any more than others."
[3] Line 4 added in 1860, which reads "If it really be as is pretended how much longer must we go on," etc. 1867 reads "How much longer must we go on," etc.
[4] Line 5 added in 1860.

Let the old propositions be postponed![1]
Let faces and theories be turn'd inside out! let meanings be freely criminal, as well as results![2]
Let there be no suggestion above the suggestion of drudgery!
Let none be pointed toward his destination! (Say! do you know your destination?)
Let men and women[3] be mock'd with bodies and mock'd with Souls!
Let the love that waits in them, wait! let it die, or pass still-born to other spheres!
Let the sympathy that waits in every man, wait! or let it also pass, a dwarf, to other spheres!
Let contradictions prevail! let one thing contradict another! and let one line of my poems contradict another!
Let the people sprawl with yearning, aimless hands! let their tongues be broken! let their eyes be discouraged! let none descend into their hearts with the fresh lusciousness of love!
(Stifled, O days! O lands! in every public and private corruption![4]
Smother'd in thievery, impotence, shamelessness, mountain-high;
Brazen effrontery, scheming, rolling like ocean's waves around and upon you, O my days! my lands!
For not even those thunderstorms, nor fiercest lightnings of the war, have purified the atmosphere;)
—Let the theory of America still be management, caste, comparison! (Say! what other theory would you?)
Let them that distrust birth and death still lead the rest![5] (Say! why shall they not lead you?)
Let the crust of hell be neared and trod on! let the days be darker than the nights! let slumber bring less slumber than waking time brings!
Let the world never appear to him or her for whom it was all made!
Let the heart of the young man still exile itself from the heart of the old man! and let the heart of the old man be exiled from that of the young man!

[1] Lines 6, 7, 8, with lines 65 and 66, afterwards published under title of "Reversals."
[2] 1856 adds "(Say! can results be criminal, and meanings not criminal?)"
[3] 1856 '60 '67 read "Let trillions of men and women," etc.
[4] Lines 17–20 added in 1870.
[5] Lines 22, 44 and 46 afterwards published under title of "Transpositions."

Let the sun and moon go! let scenery take the applause of the audience! let there be apathy under the stars!
Let freedom prove no man's inalienable right! every one who can tyrannize, let him tyrannize to his satisfaction!
Let none but infidels be countenanced!
Let the eminence of meanness, treachery, sarcasm, hate, greed, indecency, impotence, lust, be taken for granted above all! let writers, judges, governments, households, religions, philosophies, take such for granted above all!
Let the worst men beget children out of the worst women!
Let the priest still play at immortality!
Let death be inaugurated!
Let nothing remain but the ashes of teachers,[1] artists, moralists, lawyers, and learn'd and polite persons!
Let him who is without my poems be assassinated!
Let the cow, the horse, the camel, the garden-bee—let the mud-fish, the lobster, the mussel, eel, the sting-ray, and the grunting pig-fish—let these, and the like of these, be put on a perfect equality with man and woman!
Let churches accommodate serpents, vermin, and the corpses of those who have died of the most filthy of diseases!
Let marriage slip down among fools, and be for none but fools!
Let men among themselves talk and think forever obscenely of women! and let women among themselves talk and think obscenely of men![2]
Let us all, without missing one, be exposed in public, naked, monthly, at the peril of our lives! let our bodies be freely handled and examined by whoever chooses!
Let nothing but copies at second hand be permitted to exist upon the earth![3]
Let the earth desert God, nor let there ever henceforth be mention'd the name of God!
Let there be no God!
Let there be money, business, imports, exports, custom, authority, precedents, pallor, dyspepsia, smut, ignorance, unbelief!

[1] 1856 '60 read "Let nothing remain upon the earth except teachers," etc.
[2] After line 38, 1856 '60 '67 read "Let every man doubt every woman! And let every woman trick every man!"
[3] 1856 reads "Let nothing but love-songs, pictures, statues, elegant works be permitted," etc. 1860 reads "Let nothing but copies, pictures, statues, reminiscences, elegant works be permitted," etc.

Let judges and criminals be transposed! let the prison-keepers be put in prison! let those that were prisoners take the keys! Say! why might they not just as well be transposed?)[1]

Let the slaves be masters! let the masters become slaves!

Let the reformers descend from the stands where they are forever bawling! let an idiot or insane person appear on each of the stands![2]

Let the Asiatic, the African, the European, the American, and the Australian, go armed against the murderous stealthiness of each other! let them sleep armed! let none believe in good will!

Let there be no unfashionable[3] wisdom! let such be scorn'd and derided off from the earth!

Let a floating cloud in the sky—let a wave of the sea[4]—let growing mint, spinach, onions, tomatoes—let these be exhibited as shows, at a great price for admission!

Let all the men of These States stand aside for a few smouchers! let the few seize on what they choose! let the rest gawk, giggle, starve, obey!

Let shadows be furnish'd with genitals! let substances be deprived of their genitals!

Let there be wealthy and immense cities—but still through any of them, not a single poet, savior, knower, lover!

Let the infidels of These States laugh all faith away!

If one man be found who has faith, let the rest set upon him!

Let them affright faith! let them destroy the power of breeding faith!

Let the she-harlots and the he-harlots be prudent! let them dance on, while seeming lasts! (O seeming! seeming! seeming!)

Let the preachers recite creeds! let them still teach only what they have been taught![5]

Let insanity still have charge of sanity!

Let books take the place of trees, animals, rivers, clouds!

[1] See note at line 22.

[2] See note at line 22.

[3] 1856 for "unfashionable" reads "living."

[4] 1856 '60 add "—Let one glimpse of your eye-sight upon the landscape or grass—"

[5] "let them teach only what they have been taught!" added in 1860. 1856 '60, after line 57 read "Let the preacher of creeds never dare to go meditate upon the hills, alone, by day or by night! (If one ever once dare, he is lost!)"

Let the daub'd portraits of heroes supersede heroes!
Let the manhood of man never take steps after itself!
Let it take steps after eunuchs, and after consumptive and genteel persons!
Let the white person again tread the black person under his heel! (Say! which is trodden under heel, after all?)
Let the reflections of the things of the world be studied in mirrors! let the things themselves still continue unstudied!
Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself![1]
Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself![2]
(What[3] real happiness have you had one single hour through your whole life?)
Let the limited years of life do nothing for the limitless years of death! (What[4] do you suppose death will do, then?)

SOLID, IRONICAL, ROLLING ORB.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Solid, ironical, rolling orb!
Master of all, and matter of fact!—at last I accept your terms;
Bringing to practical, vulgar tests, of all my ideal dreams,
And of me, as lover and hero.

BATHED IN WAR'S PERFUME.

First published in "Drum-Taps," 1865.

Bathed in war's perfume—delicate flag!
(Should the days needing armies, needing fleets, come again,)
O to hear you call the sailors and the soldiers! flag like a beautiful woman!
O to hear the tramp, tramp, of a million answering men! O the ships they arm with joy!
O to see you leap and beckon from the tall masts of ships!
O to see you peering down on the sailors on the decks!
Flag like the eyes of women.

[1] See note at line 8.
[2] See note at line 8.
[3] 1856 '60 read "(Say! What") etc.
[4] 1856 '60 read "(Say! What") etc.

THOUGHT.

First published in 1860.

Of what I write from myself—As if that were not the resume;
Of Histories—As if such, however complete, were not less complete than the preceding poems;
As if those shreds, the records of nations, could possibly be as lasting as the preceding poems;
As if here were not the amount of all nations, and of all the lives of heroes.

LESSONS.

Published in "Passage to India."

There are who teach only the sweet lessons of peace and safety;
But I teach lessons of war and death to those I love,
That they readily meet invasions, when they come.

THIS DAY, O SOUL.

First published in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," 1865-6.

This day, O Soul, I give you a wondrous mirror;
Long in the dark, in tarnish and cloud it lay—But the cloud has pass'd, and the tarnish gone;
. . . Behold, O Soul! it is now a clean and bright mirror,
Faithfully showing you all the things of the world.

TO THE READER AT PARTING.

First published in 1867.

Now, dearest comrade, lift me to your face,
We must separate awhile—Here! take from my lips this kiss.
Whoever you are, I give it especially to you;
So long!—And I hope we shall meet again.

TWO RIVULETS.[1]

First published in 1876.

Two Rivulets side by side,
Two blended, parallel, strolling tides,
Companions, travelers, gossiping as they journey.

For the Eternal Ocean bound,
These ripples, passing surges, streams of Death and Life,
Object and Subject hurrying, whirling by,
The Real and Ideal,

Alternate ebb and flow the Days and Nights,
(Strands of a Trio twining, Present, Future, Past.)

In You, whoe'er you are, my book perusing,
In I myself—in all the World—these ripples flow,
All, all, toward the mystic Ocean tending.

(O yearnful waves! the kisses of your lips!
Your breast so broad, with open arms, O firm, expanded shore!)

OR FROM THAT SEA OF TIME.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

I

Or, from that Sea of Time,
Spray, blown by the wind—a double winrow-drift of weeds and shells;
(O little shells, so curious-convolute! so limpid-cold and voiceless!
Yet will you not, to the tympans of temples held,
Murmurs and echoes still bring up—Eternity's music, faint and far,
Wafted inland, sent from Atlantica's rim—strains for the Soul of the Prairies,
Whisper'd reverberations—chords for the ear of the West, joyously sounding
Your tidings old, yet ever new and untranslatable;)

[1] Title given to the Second Volume of Centennial Edition, 1876. This poem, which gave the title, and three others not reprinted in later editions, we have included in "Gathered Leaves."

Infinitessimals out of my life, and many a life,
(For not my life and years alone I give—all, all I give;)
These thoughts and Songs—waifs from the deep—here, cast high and dry,
Wash'd on America's shores.

2

Currents of starting a Continent new,
Overtures sent to the solid out of the liquid,
Fusion of ocean and land—tender and pensive waves,
(Not safe and peaceful only—waves rous'd and ominous too.
Out of the depths, the storm's abysms—Who knows whence? Death's waves,
Raging over the vast, with many a broken spar and tatter'd sail.)

FROM MY LAST YEARS.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

From my last years, last thoughts I here bequeath,
Scatter'd and dropt, in seeds, and wafted to the West,
Through moisture of Ohio, prairie soil of Illinois—through Colorado, California air,
For Time to germinate fully.

IN FORMER SONGS.

Published in "Two Rivulets," 1876.

In former songs Pride have I sung, and Love, and passionate, joyful Life,
But here I twine the strands of Patriotism and Death.

And now, Life, Pride, Love, Patriotism and Death,
To you, O Freedom, purport of all!
(You that elude me most—refusing to be caught in songs of mine,)
I offer all to you.

2

'Tis not for nothing, Death,
I sound out you, and words of you, with daring tone—embodying you,
In my new Democratic chants—keeping you for a close,
For last impregnable retreat—a citadel and tower,
For my last stand—my pealing, final cry.

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